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JUDITH TRACHTENBERG

A Novel

By KARL EMIL FRANZOS

AUTHOR OF "FOR THE RIGHT" ETC.

TRANSLATED BY

(MRS.) L. P. AND C. T. LEWIS

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JUDITH TRACHTENBERG.

CHAPTER I.

About sixty years ago, during the reign of the Emperor Francis the First, there lived in a small town in Eastern Galicia an excellent man, who had been greatly favored by fortune. His name was Nathaniel Trachtenberg; his occupation was that of a chandler. He had inherited from his father a modest business, which he had increased by his energy and perseverance, by adding to it the manufacture of wax candles, and by the admirable quality of his goods. Possibly, also, by the wise moderation he used in demanding payment, which had secured nearly all the noble families of the country as his patrons.

His intellectual progress kept pace with his increase of riches. Richly endowed by nature, he acquired, by his intercourse with those of superior position and by the numerous journeys he made to the West for business purposes, a higher degree of culture than was usual with his co-religionists of that period. He spoke and wrote German fluently; he read the Vienna papers regularly, and even occasionally a poet, such as Schiller or Lessing.

But, no matter how widely his opinions might vary from those of his less-cultivated co-religionists as to the aims and purposes of life, he bound himself closely to them in matters of dress and style of living, and not only conformed to every command of the Law, but carried out every injunction of the rabbis with punctilious exactitude.

"You do not know the atmosphere we breathe," he was accustomed to say to his progressive Jewish friends in Breslau and Vienna. "It does not matter as to my opinion of the sinfulness of carrying a stick on the Sabbath, but it is important to prove to them by the example of a man they respect that one may read German books, talk with Christians in correct German, and still be a pious Jew. Therefore it would be a sin if my *talar* were replaced by a German coat. Do you suppose, either, it would bring me closer to the gentry? No, indeed. They would only regard it as an impotent attempt to raise myself to their level. So we better-educated Jews must remain as we are for the present, at least, as regards externals." This was the result of serious conviction, he always added; and how serious, he proved by the method of education which he pursued with his two children, his wife having died while she was still quite young.

There was a boy, Raphael, and a girl, Judith. The latter gave promise of great beauty. Both received a careful education, in accordance with the requirements of the age, from a tutor, one Herr Bergheimer, who had been brought from Mayence by Trachtenberg. But their religious training was cared for by the father himself. "I will not say," he once told the tutor, "whether or not I consider it a misfortune to have been born a Jew. I have my own ideas on the subject, which might shock your simple faith. Whether good or ill, it is our fate, and must be borne with equanimity. Therefore I wish my children educated with the most profound reverence for Judaism. The humiliations which will come to them because of their nation I can neither prevent nor modify, so I wish they should have the comfort of feeling in their struggles in life that they are suffering for something which is dear to them and is worth the pain."

With this feeling he strove to stifle in their minds every germ of hatred towards Christians, and at the same time he early accustomed them to the idea that, sooner or later, they must run the gantlet because of their creed, and even because of the cast of their features.

"They must learn to endure," he would say, with a sad smile. And so he allowed Raphael and Judith to associate with Christian children belonging to families who, for private reasons, were glad to pay some attention to the wealthy Jewish fabricant.

Trachtenberg thought this intercourse of small consequence, never dreaming it might exercise an influence over the character of his children quite the opposite of that he would like. And it could not but make an impression on the youthful minds growing up on a borderland where the musty air of the Ghetto mingled with another air no whit purer, compounded, as it was, of the incense of a fanatical creed and the pestilential gases of decaying Polish aristocracy.

Separated from the Jewish children of the town by mode of life, manner of speech, and learning, they were not less divided from their Christian play-fellows by instinct and prejudices which made a really hearty sympathy and intercourse impossible. Whoever looks into a child's heart knows well it can surrender every other necessity than that of loving and being loved. No matter how much the father might attempt to prevent a feeling of isolation for his darlings, the time came when, of necessity, he acknowledged to himself that he had not properly appreciated the bitterness which this feeling aroused, and when he was forced to stand by and look on helplessly as they sought for companionship with others of the same age.

This happened when Raphael had reached his twenty-first and Judith her nineteenth year. They had just completed a course of dancing lessons, held in the house of Herr von Wroblewski, a magistrate, and one of Trachtenberg's most expensive acquaintances.

Raphael, who was weary of bearing slights because of his curly hair and round eyes, resolved, bitterly, that he would never again enter the house of a Christian, but would find associates among those to whom he belonged by race and common woe.

Judith's experience was just the contrary. She felt more and more at home among her Christian friends; and went to her Hebrew lessons with a frown. But their father's authority prevented any complete change in their way of life, so they complied with his requirements just as little as they could. The wise man recognized the fact that his intentions were combated by the strongest of human emotions--self-satisfaction on the one side, on the other injured self-love.

Poor Raphael was doubly hateful to his partners in the dance because he was a Jew, whereas the premature beauty of his sister entranced her youthful admirers, because they could cherish hopes as regarded her on account of her race which would not have entered their minds towards a girl belonging to their own class.

At times it troubled Trachtenberg's mind lest this "childishness" should have a permanent influence upon their lives. But accustomed, as he had been for so many years, to keen calculation rather than to doubtful presentiments, he felt his forebodings vanish when he remembered his carefully laid plans for the future, which he thought could not be interfered with by these inclinations, but, so he sometimes sought to persuade himself, were even promoted by them.

He had intended his son for the law, not only because, like the rest of his race, he considered a diploma of a doctor of laws the highest of honors, but because he aspired to have him a model and a champion for his co-religionists. As Raphael was to pass his life in Galicia, it was well he should have this feeling for the oppressed awakened early, since it would nerve him for his destined work; while Judith, whom her father proposed to marry to some enlightened and educated German Jew, could best acquire that knowledge of etiquette and refinement which she

would need in her future home in Christian society.

Influenced by these considerations, Trachtenberg allowed matters to take their own course as long as he feared no break in their mutual affection. But their relations were becoming more and more strained, and it was difficult for the father to decide which was most to blame. The alienation which had arisen did not spring from lack of love, or from difference in mental constitution.

Moreover, Raphael and Judith bore not the slightest physical resemblance to each other, he being an awkward, haggard youth with a pale, sharply cut face, above which was a forest of crinkly-black hair; while she was a sweet, delicate rosebud of a girl, her beautiful brow crowned with masses of rich auburn hair; and although her cheerfulness and love of gayety contrasted strongly with his morose and gloomy manners, yet in vital matters they showed they were children of the same mother.

Both were gifted, sensitive, and fastidious; both ambitious and proud; both self-conscious to defiance, and each dearer to the other than life. It was this very equality of mental capacity that divided and embittered them. Each thought his own inclination the only right one, sensible, and just; each felt sorely wounded at the other's reproof; each worried about the other's future, and treasured up accidental or slighting observations relating to the other. She remembered the contemptuous sneer of the Polish ladies at the "gloomy follower of the Talmud;" he, every poisonous jest of the Ghetto about the "renegade."

And so it came to pass that, though their love was really intact, yet outwardly they were almost in open warfare, and, urged on by pride and defiance, they went further than they themselves would have thought possible. Because Judith despised Jewish acquaintances, Raphael swore enmity towards all Christians; and because he became more and more observant of the ritual, she neglected it altogether.

But their acquaintances were the chief cause of contention. She made fun of his friends in the Ghetto, their modes of speech, thought, and life; and indeed she had sufficient cause. Raphael never wearied of speaking disdainfully of the magistrate and his social circle, and he required no power of invention to find grounds for his criticisms.

Herr Ludwig von Wroblewski was in position, though not in public estimation, the most important man in the town; for the people could not pardon certain traits which, good in themselves, were not in him because of his office. While many men in similar position, with antiquated ideas, tried to supervise the entire parish, urging the rate-payers to improve their roads and bridges, he was of the opinion that full-grown men ought to be able to manage their own affairs best; and while they hunted down criminals, he, so it appeared, thought the consciousness of crime sufficient punishment for the evil-doer. Squabbles about money and land were painful to him also, if plaintiff and defendant happened to be poor people, in which case he found it best to let the case slide. When, however, it was otherwise, he gave his undivided attention; and while other judges contented themselves with acting upon the written case, he allowed each party to present his arguments *cum solo*. There were few judges who were so careful, under such circumstances, to be just to each. For instance, if the plaintiff brought a thousand proofs and the defendant but five hundred, he gave himself no rest till he had produced another five hundred. This, of course, delayed justice very much. If there was no other way, Herr von Wroblewski left it to fate, and cut cards about it--the highest card winning. One need not be astonished at that, for he was very much at home with cards, since every busy man must have his recreation.

Indeed, Herr von Wroblewski not only recruited himself every evening with this amusement, but mornings and afternoons as well, when he could find a partner. He played everything, but as a liberal and an enemy of bureaucracy, chiefly the forbidden games of hazard. Away from home his luck often changed, but at his own table--he lived in the *bel étage* of Trachtenberg's house--he always won. This curious circumstance was frequently mentioned, and did not tend to increase the respect in which he was held. Perhaps here, too, the proverb, "If good luck in play, then bad luck in love," held good with Herr von Wroblewski, for, though he had been dangerous to many ladies of the town, he could lay claim to very little tenderness within his own four walls.

His wife, Lady Anna, a stout fair lady on the verge of forty, belonged to an old Polish family, was an ardent adherent of the Metternich *régime*, and leaned on the church and the army. It was rather difficult for her to decide whether she would rather be supported by the fat Dominican prior, Pater Hieronymus, or the supple Rittmeister, Herr von Bariassy.

Her girlish years had been passed in the house of her aunt, the wife of the highest official in Lemberg, and she had become so agreeable to the childless pair that her grateful uncle had given her a dowry and a husband, and was so good as to provide for her even after marriage. She seemed to have preserved pleasant reminiscences of him, which possibly accounted for the freak of nature which made her eldest daughter Wanda so singularly like her dear uncle.

This influential man sustained Herr Ludwig in his office, despite the incessant complaints raised against him; and so it got to be that the worthies of the town considered themselves justified in being neither stricter nor severer than the government.

The receptions at the magistrate's house were the most brilliant in the neighborhood, no one absenting himself voluntarily. Judith used to taunt her brother with this when he expressed his contempt for the man, and even Trachtenberg would say: "You are young, and think to better the world. But when you are older you will find there is but one way of doing it, which is to better yourself. It is impossible for me to do more in our times and circumstances. Certainly, Wroblewski is a corruptible judge, a card-sharper, and a scoundrel. But would he change if I ceased to hold intercourse with him? I have never used my influence with him for evil; and when he has proposed I should be his agent in a disreputable affair, I have always declined. He brings me custom, and therefore he lives in this house rent-free. He decides in my favor when I am obliged to sue, and for that receives twenty per cent. If I declined to give that, he would recommend other manufacturers, and I should lose my eighty per cent."

"Very good! But Judith?" said Raphael. "Does your business require she should go to their receptions every Tuesday?"

"Why should I not allow her this pleasure?" was the reply. "The host is contemptible, the wife not blameless, but the guests are different. The daughters of the physician and the chemist come regularly--carefully trained daughters of good parents. They run no danger; why should your sister?"

"They not, but Judith!" How often had Raphael had these words on his tongue and withheld them! What ground could he give for his fears? He had no facts to offer, only observations which his father would have condemned as the result of prejudice.

A year passed by with these unpleasant episodes. Raphael was to visit a university, and the father decided upon Heidelberg. Bergheimer was to accompany him and remain for some months.

Trachtenberg also gave the old master another commission. He was to look out for a suitable husband for Judith. For, as she had developed into a greater beauty than the tenderest of fathers could have expected, and as he was not unmindful of his wealth, he thought no one too good for her. So, too, since he had learned to appreciate the Jews of West Germany during his journeyings there, an educated, cultivated bridegroom from that quarter was the height of his ambition.

Judith surmised nothing, partly, perhaps, because she was so filled with sorrow over the departure of her dearly loved brother. True, she was doubly eager just then in her intercourse with Christians, declining no invitation to dance or picnic; but she would have relinquished a whole year of this pleasure if Raphael had, by a single word, given her a chance to confess her penitence and love. Yet it was impossible to make this avowal without some encouragement, especially as Raphael became more and more gloomy and inaccessible, really because he was burdened with the same misery.

The day before his departure finally arrived--a sunny September day--and early that morning Judith made up her mind to pocket her pride and have the longed-for interview. A chance prevented it.

This day, ill-omened for the house of Trachtenberg, was a festival day for the other inhabitants of the town. The new lord of the manor, Count Agenor Baranowski, was to take possession of his estates. Much depended on winning his good-will, as, owing to his immense property, he was the most influential man in the province. Therefore they had decorated the houses, improved the roads, and even swept the streets.

The Jews had been most zealous in all this, and had used quantities of garlands and much colored paper, not because they were particularly in favor with him, but because he had the reputation of hating the Jews.

Raphael used his severest satire in criticising this "slavish humility," but his father differed from him. His house was the most handsomely decorated of any, and from the gables there actually flew the light-blue and silver colors of the Baranowski. But he did not interfere with Raphael, who wished to go for a walk till the comedy should have been played out; though he himself went to the triumphal arch, which had been erected near his house, so that he might welcome the count as deputy for the Jews, while Judith went to the first *étage*.

The magistrate's apartment did not make a very good impression by daylight. The threadbare velvet of the furniture, with dust in every nook and cranny, and the curious medley of grand and shabby furniture were very apparent. It was quite in harmony for Lady Anna, her full form squeezed into a red silk dress, and her head surmounted by a pyramid of artificial flowers, to be bustling about with a duster in her hand, giving orders to her servants and receiving her guests at the same time.

For Herr von Wroblewski had made the count's acquaintance in Lemberg, and had taken care to have the honor of receiving him in his house the very first evening. Many guests had been invited from the neighborhood, and part of them had arrived in the morning. The gentlemen were at the triumphal arch, while the ladies were to view the procession from the windows.

The handsome hostess was fuming inwardly, still she had a friendly word for all, even for Judith.

"Why, child, how pretty you have made yourself today!" she exclaimed; and in truth the girl, in a dress of blue print, looked charming. The curls, clustering around her delicate forehead, shone like spun gold, and her neck was circled by a white silk ribbon with long ends.

"And you are wearing the count's colors," she continued, playfully shaking her finger. "How clever you are!"

"A mere coincidence," stammered Judith, blushing painfully; and she spoke the truth.

Lady Anna laughed. "You need not fib about it. I only wish I had been clever enough to think of it for Wanda. It is a pity you are not coming this evening; but, as it is, there are over a hundred invited, and I shiver when I think of the supper. At any rate, I have kept a good place for you at the window," and she led her to the most distant corner, where she had stowed away some poor relations, who had to consider the invitation as an undeserved honor, and so could not grumble at the company of the Jewess.

The spectators in the street below were squeezed in between the guards of honor, composed of peasants of the vicinity, and made futile attempts to reach the triumphal arch, where the worthies of the town had taken their position--on the right the magistrate, the prior, the burgomaster, and some others; on the left Nathaniel, the rabbi, and some Jews who carried the Thora rolls under a red baldachino. Judith could not see much of it, and Lady Anna's nieces used their elbows; but, fortunately, they did not wait long.

The salvos of artillery boomed, the monastery bells began to peal, and then the committee of peasants, chosen to escort their master, appeared, followed by his carriage, from which he alighted quickly.

The burgomaster (he was the apothecary of the town) began his address. He was a small, thin man, with a shrivelled-up face, who, when silent, made one think of a sick chicken; but he had a lion's voice in his throat, and was celebrated as the Demosthenes of the countryside. He did not discredit his reputation on this occasion, as he plunged with enthusiasm into the depths of the Middle Ages, raising the query as to whether the family of the Baranowskis was more ancient than that of the Jagellon, and thus embracing a comprehensive glance over Polish history.

Count Agenor, a young, well-built man, with a sad, handsome face, which was very pale by contrast with his jet-black beard, listened attentively at first, and then began to look about him. His eyes swept the windows of the Trachtenberg house, and Judith colored violently, for she saw distinctly how his face kindled as they rested on her window. Was this for her?

Her neighbors remarked it, too, and one hissed to the other, "The colors have had effect!" She heard it distinctly, and was about to withdraw, but the apothecary just at that moment ended his speech; the crowd shouted "Huzza!" The count said a few words of thanks, and was about to enter his carriage again, when Nathaniel stepped forward.

She saw how the young nobleman turned impatiently away and looked up at her window, and again she blushed painfully.

Her father said but a few words; the count thanked him by an inclination of his head, and, preceded by his escort, he drove on. As he passed the window, he looked up and saluted, placing his hand on his jewelled *konfederatka*.

"It is evident he has no liking for us," Trachtenberg remarked at dinner, a few hours later; but when Raphael made another cutting observation, he said, good-humoredly, "Do you think he would like us better if, contrary to usage and good-breeding, we had taken no part in his welcome?"

Raphael made no reply, but sat looking moodier than ever, until, dinner ended, he quitted the room, going, as he said, to pack his trunks. Judith then plucked up courage and offered her assistance, somewhat flippantly, indeed, making a jest of his awkwardness.

She adopted this manner to keep up her courage and to prepare an opening for escape in case of a snub; but Raphael heard only the mockery, and answered, bitterly, that he would be able to do without help, and left the room angrily. Still she kept to her good resolutions, and was glad when another opportunity was thrown in her way.

Late that afternoon, shortly after Von Wroblewski had returned from the reception at the Baranowski castle, Wanda came running down-stairs to beg Judith, in her mother's name, to go up that evening, as several young ladies had declined just at the last moment. This had frequently occurred, and, owing to their intimacy, Judith had taken it in good part. But on this occasion she declined, since it was Raphael's last evening at home. Wanda, however, would not allow this. "You must come! Bring Raphael with you."

He had not gone on their stairs for more than a year, and that Lady Anna should invite "that gloomy follower of the Talmud" to her most brilliant party was surprising. It shot through her brain--"She is inviting him because she knows he will not go." So she answered she would accept the invitation with pleasure if she could induce Raphael to do so too.

When Wanda grew excited, protesting she scarcely dared go up-stairs with such a reply, as "mamma and papa laid such stress on her coming; papa in particular," Judith was surprised, but answered all the more obstinately, until, after repeated entreaties from Wanda, she at last went to her brother.

Her heart throbbed as she opened the door. He sat at his empty work-table, his head resting on his hand, gazing at the candles.

With difficulty she made her request.

"In what good taste!" he sneered. "Of course, I will not go, but I will not prevent your going. It would be a sacrifice to you, and no pleasure to me."

His tone roused her spirit of defiance. "If it is a matter of such indifference to you, I have nothing more to say."

"But I have," he thundered, seizing her arm. "It is the last time, and therefore I will speak more plainly than I have as yet. You are no longer a child, Judith, and can you not see the rôle you play among those people? You are a Jewess, and they think no more of you than I do of our house-dog. Were you as beautiful as the Shunamite, as wise as the Queen of Sheba, and as good as an angel of the Lord, still you are a Jewess, and consequently not a being like themselves. Do you not feel that? My God, girl, are you insensible to this shame?"

"You are talking wildly," she said, contemptuously. "You are blinded by hurt pride. Of course, if one brings the air of the Ghetto into a drawing-room, one ought not to complain," and she attempted to free her arm.

But he held her. "Go on!" he said. "Say what you like, my tender sister, but then listen to me. Do you understand why they invite you? Just inquire of my father's ledger."

"The old story," she exclaimed, and tore her arm away.

"Well, then," he cried, in great excitement, "listen to something else, which I have kept from you. You are not a child, but a full-grown, beautiful girl, Judith--beautiful and a Jewess. Have you really never noticed that these young cavaliers treat you differently from the Christian ladies, that they allow themselves more liberties?"

She stood motionless, breathing hard. "You lie!" she ejaculated.

"I would to God I did!" he answered, clasping his hands in despair. "Then I could travel tomorrow with an easier conscience. Be warned, my sister! That gentleman up-stairs does not only invite you because he owes father his rent, but also because the young gentlemen whose money he wins like to have fun with the beautiful Jewess. Guard your soul, my sister; guard your honor; you will not have been the first that--"

She had listened to him as if paralyzed with indignation. Now she stepped up to him, her face so pale and distorted that he shrank back involuntarily.

She wished to speak, but her voice failed her. "May God forgive you!" she at last ejaculated, hoarsely, and staggering left the room.

Hurrying to her own room, she bolted the door and lay down upon the bed. There she stayed in the darkness for at least two hours, fighting with her emotions. Anger at her insulted pride and the unjust accusations raged through her pulses; her fingers twisted together as if she were throttling her insulter.

But it was Raphael, and that it was he, her most beloved creature on earth, who had so stained her innocent pleasures and herself, caused the tears to well to her eyes.

But were these tears as innocent as they seemed? Up to that hour Judith had been one of the purest of Nature's children; her blood suggested no evil desire, nor did her fancy paint alluring pictures. Her innocence had draped her eyes like a veil. But now the veil, indeed, was not rent, but it grew more and more transparent the more she pondered on these things. Her cheeks burned more from shame than from tears, and she was forced to surrender herself helplessly to these ugly thoughts.

But this accusation, painful as it was, roused her. Her anger reasserted itself--her anger and defiance--and pushed everything else into the background. She would think no more about it; she did not wish to know if he were right; he was not right, of that she was sure. He was blinded by his antipathy to Christians. She was blameless, and was she to be buried alive to gratify him?

Just then she heard Wanda knocking at her door and begging her to hasten. Answering "I will be there directly," she washed the tears from her cheeks, called her maid, and dressed.

When she entered the drawing-room, a half-hour later, Lady Anna came to meet her, supported by the church. "At last!" she exclaimed, delightedly. "And this must be your lucky day. I have rarely seen you look so pretty." In fact, her excitement had imparted an additional charm to her lovely face.

The stout cleric grinned like a faun, and stroked chin. "Ha, ha! how her cheeks glow! Does her little heart beat so wildly?" He seemed inclined to prove the truth of his assertion.

Judith turned deathly pale, and stepped back.

"What do you mean?" Lady Anna whispered to her worthy admirer, who had evidently just come from the buffet. She glanced around, and saw they were forming a quadrille. Count Baranowski was fulfilling the disagreeable duty of dancing with the voluminous wife of the thin burgomaster.

"Who knows," said Lady Anna, smiling, "what honor would have been yours if you had come earlier; now you must content yourself with young Wolczinski. Wladko!"

The tall, clumsy fellow stumbled up hastily. "You will dance this quadrille with Judith."

He hesitated. "I am--I have--" he stammered.

"What? already engaged?"

"No, but--"

"What then? too tired?" Lady Anna's eyes had not the pleasantest expression in the world just then. "Well, will you? *Allons!*"

He shrugged his shoulders, and offered his arm to the girl. Judith followed him with bowed head, as if crushed by the humiliation. "Have I experienced these things before, and now for the first time notice them?"

Wladko had, indeed, been rude to her often; both he and his sisters had cut her dead. But she had not taken it to heart, for she knew the reason. The head of the family, Herr Severin von Wolczinski, who had gotten rid of all his property with the exception of one small estate in close proximity to the town, had begged in vain for a loan from Nathaniel. The manufacturer's answer had always been the same. He would throw the account for goods received into the fire, but, on principle, he refused to lend money.

The young gentleman did not speak; he even avoided looking at his partner. At last he conceived a bright idea. "'Pon my honor," he exclaimed, "now I recognize you. The candles burn badly. They are miserable stuff. Supplied, no doubt, by some cheating Jew for more than they are worth."

Judith drew a long breath. "My father supplied them. They are both good and cheap, although he is often swindled of hard-earned money by some knavish nobleman."

The bystanders became attentive, which annoyed "Wladko still more.

"A nobleman never swindles," he asserted.

"Oh, yes, at times they do. Ordering goods which one can never pay for is swindling."

Some laughed. The prior, too, came staggering up, for he had just been visiting the buffet again, and could scarcely stand. "Wladko," he hiccoughed, "what are you quarrelling with the pretty Jewess about? You should kiss and make up."

"Do you really think so?" The young fellow laughed nervously. The next moment he had thrown his arms around her form and had kissed her on the neck. The brave deed was rewarded by loud laughter and clapping of hands.

Pale as death, and trembling from head to foot, Judith tore herself free. "What a cowardly, knavish, trick!" she exclaimed, indignantly.

"You are right!" said a deep, sonorous voice, so loudly that it was distinctly heard above the noise. "It was a mean, cowardly trick!"

The speaker was Agenor Baranowski.

"Monsieur le Comte!" exclaimed Wladko.

"I am at your service whenever you like. Will you do me the honor of taking my arm, mademoiselle?"

He led her through the guests, who silently made way for them.

"Where may I conduct you?" he inquired. "Is your mother here?"

"I have no mother. But I live in the house."

"I know you are the daughter of Herr Trachtenberg, who welcomed me so pleasantly to-day. Well, then, shall I take you to your housekeeper?"

"No, only as far as the stairs, please," for she felt her strength failing her.

He accompanied her to the stairs, and took leave of her with a profound bow.

"But, Judith!" called Lady Anna, rushing out of the room.

The girl did not hear her, and the count had returned to the salon.

CHAPTER II.

The next day people were talking everywhere of the kiss and its consequences. In the drawing-room of the magistrate, in the café of Aaron Siebenschläfer, where the Christian dignitaries assembled, and in the court of the synagogue, where the public opinion of the Ghetto originated.

"That is the result," complained the Jews, "of allowing a Jewish child to frequent Christian balls. Why need she have been so irritable when the young gentleman made a joke about her father? But the innocent must expiate the sins committed by the guilty. Wladko and the count will have a duel, and if one is killed, or (may God forbid!) both of them, on whom will this blood rest? On us all; for a Jewish child was the cause!"

"The impudent thing!" said the Christians. "She certainly is beautiful, and her beauty has bewitched the count. That is his only excuse. What had he to do with it? He ought to have kissed her, too. But, in the first place, she ought not to have been invited."

Lady Anna had her excuse ready, and, when this was said to her, made answer: "She was invited at his express request. The little coquette attracted his attention at his *entrée*, and he immediately asked my husband her name, saying, when they parted, 'I shall be pleased to meet *all* those pretty ladies again to-night.' Tell me what else I could do? Now I suppose the little upstart is proud of what she has done."

There she made a mistake. The poor little beauty felt as if she could never show her face again to the world. Sorrow gnawed her heart, and tears poured over her pale cheeks. She had only left her own room once, early in the dawn, when the carriage drove up which was to carry her brother away.

Then she fell on his neck, and covered his face, clothes, and hand with her tears and kisses, until he, too, wept with her. "Pardon me!" she stammered again and again. "You meant it for the best; you are always right; you were right last night, and I will remember it my life long."

He had no knowledge of the painful scene of the preceding evening, nor had his father, who stood gazing affectionately on them. So they started on their journey with a light heart. Nathaniel was to accompany his son the first day, and would not be home until the next evening.

Till then Judith kept in her room; even Lady Anna knocked in vain. She had come to have a sensible talk with the girl before Nathaniel's return. The old Jew was clever, but one could not tell how he would take the affair; and this was of great importance, as Herr von Wroblewski was thinking of applying for a considerable loan.

She went away uneasily after hearing no sound behind the door, but she lost little in not having had a conversation. For, had Judith's own father told her she had been wrong in repaying insult with insult, she would not have believed him. She was convinced she had done what was right, and was also convinced she had hitherto been tolerated only by the people in whose society she had found such pleasure and delight.

How humiliating the recollection of their friendliness, even more so than the remembrance of the insult! For while she thirsted passionately for revenge, it angered her to think of one even of that set with gratitude and respect. She recalled his glance in the morning; her face had led him on, or perhaps he wished to earn her regard. But again came the thought of his noble interposition in her behalf, of the deep respect he showed when leading her from the room, and his face rose before her--the pale, noble, commanding face with the sad eyes.

"No," she sobbed, "he is no better than the others." Yet this decision brought no consolation to the poor heart but fresh grief.

Another child of man was weeping inconsolably over the same event, but he was not beautiful as was the golden-haired Jewess. It was Herr Wladko von Wolczinski. And with him sobbed his father, mother, and four sisters, so that the whole house re-echoed with their lamentations.

His cousin Jan was the only one who remained unmoved. "Howl away," he growled. "If you did

not wish to fight a duel, you should not have allowed us to persuade you into sending a challenge. It's only twenty-five paces, and only once firing. Baby, do be a man! Shoot him down! You can hit a deer at twenty-five paces."

"Jan," cried Wladko, "how can you be so heartless? Has a deer a pistol in its hand, aimed at me? It's a horrible thought!" Then, as the ladies kept up their quintet of sobs, old Herr Wolczinski determined to see if anything could be done to avert the calamity, and went to the magistrate.

"I have no desire to reproach you," he began, gloomily and energetically, "but it is your duty to prevent bloodshed. Count Agenor is the last of his line; he ought not fall by the hand of a Wolczinski. Let him only write a brief apology, which we can insert in the *Lemberg Gazette*, and the duel will be stopped."

Herr von Wroblewski had hard work to restrain his merriment, and indeed he did not entirely succeed.

"I scarcely think that possible," he replied. "Count Agenor was a Uhlan officer before he succeeded to his estates, and left the service in high repute."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the baron, affecting astonishment. "I did not know it. In that case we would only be giving him a choice between moral and physical death, which would be hard. Then we will only require a written apology, which we shall not publish."

Herr von Wroblewski cleared his throat. "Well, then, we shall give no one occasion to say we are revengeful. An oral apology will suffice. We will invite a few gentlemen. Count Agenor can come to us, and--" The baron came to a stop. Herr von Wroblewski cleared his throat louder than ever.

"Or--h'm--! We won't invite any one--or we could meet here! You, Wladko, the count, and myself, quite informally. He could just mutter something, as, 'I did not intend to give offence, etc.' They would shake hands, and--"

Herr von Wroblewski was seized with a severe fit of coughing.

"D--- it all!" swore the old gentleman, wiping the perspiration from his face. "We cannot make it easier. We couldn't go to him, so that he could say the few words. Or--h'm!--do you think we could?"

"It would be very unusual," said the magistrate again, sober as the grave.

"Unusual! That does not matter! *Mon Dieu!* Everything must be done for the first time. My dear friend, I beg of you, I implore you to--"

"I will do my best," promised Wroblewski, and he kept his word. He went to the count the very next day, and laughingly laid the proposition before him. Agenor laughed aloud.

"It is impossible. I am an officer. No matter what I said to the boy, it would be regarded as an apology."

"But you don't thirst for his blood. Just consider--a young fellow excited by champagne, and she a Jewess!"

"He met her as your guest."

"Yes, certainly! I do not intend to excuse Wladko. But be honest, my dear count. Would you have said anything if she had been ugly?"

"Yes," said Agenor, seriously. "I do not love the Jews, as you know; quite the contrary; and not because of my experience with them as a young officer. But I find it quite natural that all creatures on earth should protect themselves with their own weapons. Theirs are trickery and money. I have frequently asked myself whose fault it is that they use such weapons. They are often men with splendid abilities, and in many ways more moral than we. I acknowledge it is very largely our own fault. We are antagonistic; we knock them down; they bite us in the heels. So, without pondering over whose fault it is, I place myself in the ranks of those to whom I belong, by blood and position."

"But, my dear count!" interrupted the official. "As if it required any words! Do you fancy I like the Jews?"

"Your position is not mine," responded Agenor, curtly. "As judge, you cannot be a party man; but I, as a private individual, may, and, as the head of an old family, must be one. For in the contest my class is being ruined. It cuts me to the heart to know this, for I think much of this class, its necessities and its obligations. We aristocrats--I mean we true, pure-blooded, wealthy old families--are the only firm pillars of the state, as, indeed, we Polish aristocrats are the only hope of our nation. There is no other besides us--the middle class scarcely exists, and the peasantry are against us. Look over the country; one man after another, one family after another, falls and sinks into oblivion--through foolishness, idleness, and bad management, I allow. But could we incur debts so readily if there were no Jews in the country? Who is the inheritor? The

Jew! Who has possession of the estates of the Wolczinskis, which a hundred years ago were enormous? Armenians, who hold them for the Jews, since they are prohibited from owning real estate themselves."

"Very true," responded Wroblewski. "And for this very reason you should not shoot the last of the Wolczinskis!"

"I do not propose to," said the count, with a smile; "although it might prove the best thing for him, and others like him. For what will become of them? Only a few can straighten out their affairs by marriage with the *bourgeoisie*, and this is a misfortune--a humiliation. We have not yet gone as far as they have in the Western provinces, where Count Wagenspergh recently married an Eskeles. Is that to happen with us? The first rule in this contest should be, no social intercourse with Jews--no pulling-down of barriers."

"Is that a reproach?" inquired the magistrate, in a hurt tone. "You yourself wished it;" and he told how he had interpreted the count's words.

"Well, yes, you understood me so," said the count, in confusion. "True, you told me the girl often came to your house. But it was foolish of me, and my folly has been severely avenged. Do you think it pleasant for me to fight a duel on account of a Jewess? But it is always the way. We turn from the beaten path for one step, and it proves to be a mile in the end. It was the first time I had met a Jewess in society; but being there, she was to be considered a lady like the rest. When the insult was offered, she was in my vicinity, and, therefore, under my protection; and such would have been the case, no matter how plain she might have been. However, this supposition does not count, as Judith is beautiful--very beautiful, unfortunately."

"Unfortunately?"

"Yes." The count looked down sadly, even gloomily. "My dear Wroblewski, if I were not aware that you knew me to be the reverse of a saint, I would be ashamed, of the confession, that since my first sight of that face I--but words cannot express it. In short, that it is a great pity that she is a Jewess, and a--"

"And?"

"And a virtuous girl." The count drew a long breath, and colored to the roots of his hair, while his fingers closed upon the ivory paper-knife with which he had been playing, with such a firm grip that it snapped in two.

The magistrate's eyes were wide open now; he winked slyly, and puckered his mouth as if to whistle. He then said softly: "One must be loyal. You have an old friend here on whom you can rely unconditionally--unconditionally, and in everything, my dear count."

The young aristocrat turned suddenly; his face was still red, and his lips trembled.

"What do you mean?" he inquired, brusquely. Wroblewski looked straight at him and smiled, but made no answer.

The count cast down his eyes. "We had better not say any more about it, at least not to-day. As regards your protégé, young Wolczinski, I cannot oblige him."

He arose, and the magistrate took up his hat. "Farewell, my dear friend," he said, offering his right hand.

But the count kept both hands in the pockets of his short riding-coat. "Adieu, Herr von Wroblewski!"

The magistrate smiled more deprecatingly than ever; but he stopped in the corridor, and soliloquized: "I did not think you were so young, my noble patron. But you shall pay dearly for that shake of the hand you gave me."

Proceeding to the Wolczinski house, his communication again started the fountains flowing. Only Herr Jan retained his composure. "Heaven will not allow two young noblemen to murder each other for the sake of a Jewess. Rest assured, God will work some miracle."

The pious confidence of the old man was not deceived. The miracle was wrought.

Nathaniel returned the same evening. He was much frightened when Judith went to meet him in great excitement. He listened to her confession, and walked up and down the room with long, nervous strides.

"Keep calm, my child," he said at last, stroking her ruffled hair tenderly. "It would have been more dignified, perhaps, to have passed over the first innuendo of the cad in silence. But it is past now, and pay no heed to the gossip; all will soon quiet down. I am only grieved for the result upon your own heart. How unhappy and how lonely you will be if you retain your present opinion of Christians! But you will not, for your present bad opinion is as erroneous as your former good opinion was. Now go away and lie down, my poor child, and sleep off your headache."

He himself kept awake a long time. "Poor child!" he mused. "Even your loveliness and brightness could not disarm hatred. How hard you will yet have to feel that hour! If you were a Pole, you would be the more sought after; and if both were killed, a hundred admirers would spring about you. But you are a daughter of that nation in which any whispered blemish on her reputation is fatal. Lost and damned, in her own country at least."

He did not paint it a whit too black, for he knew his own countrymen. It seemed strange enough to them that he should have allowed her to reach her twentieth year without marrying, and now how they would judge her! It became of vital importance for Bergheimer to secure a suitable *parti* for Judith from abroad, for at home she would have no chance. Even should he pile up mountains of gold, it would be impossible, duel or no duel. But in case it took place, the news would spread abroad, and the coming bridegroom would probably hear of it at the first Galician town in which he rested.

This supposition sank into the old man's soul with terrible force.

"Am I blameless?" he asked himself. "Have I given my child the education best conducive to her own good? Was I right in rejecting Raphael's warning?"

The following morning, instead of going to his *comptoir*, he went where he would meet his acquaintances--on the street, and to the *Weinstube* of Aaron Siebenschläfer. He turned the conversation in the direction of the proposed duel, treating it quite as a joke. Every one was surprised--the Christians wondering how they could have made so much of it, while the Jews shook their heads dubiously.

At noon Nathaniel paid a visit to his lodger. He curtly interrupted Wroblewski's flow of words. "I know you could not help it. But you must do me a favor now. The duel must not take place."

"How can I help it? Both the count and Wladko are foaming with rage."

Nathaniel was a polite man, but he could speak plainly on occasions. "You are mistaken," he said, quietly. "Wladko is dying of fear, and the count told you yesterday how painful to his feelings a duel would be on account of a Jewess. Your mistake arises from your desire to demand from me a large recompense for your services, and you wish to justify it by magnifying the difficulty of the negotiation. But that is not to be. You know I am willing you should earn money, but in this case I will not advance one penny. I will not have it said I preserved my daughter's good fame with money. If, however, you will do it for the sake of old friendship--"

Herr von Wroblewski made a gesture as if he had been the recipient of a token of Trachtenberg's deepest respect.

"There is no need of many words between us. Say on, my old friend."

"The difficulty is in the way alone. The count is unable to tender an apology. Wladko cannot withdraw without one. This can be circumvented in the following manner: Wladko can come with his father to-morrow morning about eleven o'clock, and beg my pardon. The count can hear of it and declare that, much as he disapproved of Wladko's conduct that evening, so now he approves of his chivalry in making a voluntary expiation."

"Splendid!" ejaculated the official. "But suppose Wladko--"

"Kef uses? He will be only too glad. At most, Jan will make it an occasion for renewing his request for a loan. But I trust you will make it clear to him."

"That this is not a time for a man of honor to ask for money? Certainly! Then to-morrow at eleven. The more formal the affair the better?"

"No. Only what is necessary."

"Shall I not invite the count, and his second, the Rittmeister? He can hear Wladko's explanation, say what he wishes, and all will be straight."

Nathaniel considered a moment, then nodded. "Yes, if the count will do me the honor."

"Then I may invite him in your name and Judith's?"

"Only in mine. Jewish girls do not send invitations to cavaliers."

"Of course," assented the magistrate. "You are always so full of tact. But she will be present, I suppose?"

"I hardly think so."

"But Nathaniel, that is absurd," said Wroblewski, energetically. "You demand satisfaction for your daughter, not because she is a Jewess, but because she is a lady of unsullied character. Accordingly, you must adapt yourself to the manner one would choose if she were a Christian."

Nathaniel paused. "Very well, I don't mind," he said, abruptly.

Herr von Wroblewski heaved a sigh of relief. "You shall now see that I am your friend. This evening you shall have news."

Two hours later he was able to announce the success of his mission. The report of the reconciliation spread through the town. Christians were annoyed, and Jews delighted; but both asked, "How much did it cost Nathaniel?"

When Judith entered the sitting-room the next morning shortly before eleven, she heard, in spite of the closed blinds, a muffled noise in the street. There stood the inquisitive crowd, shoulder to shoulder. Turning pale, she stepped back.

"Why are you astonished?" Nathaniel asked, smiling. "The sight to-day will be more wonderful than that of five days ago. It has many times happened that a new lord has entered the town, but never before that a Schlachzig has come to beg pardon of a Jewess. I would give a good deal if--"

He stopped, for when he saw her before him, so pale, serious, and melancholy, his heart seemed bursting with pity, and the gentle reproof died on his lips.

"My poor child!" he murmured.

Perhaps it was the black woollen dress, unrelieved, contrary to her usual custom, by flowers or ornaments of any kind, but she seemed quite a different creature. The gay, beautiful child had suddenly developed into a staid woman with sad, wise eyes. Her form seemed more slender, and her features sharper.

"Did you sleep last night?" he asked, stroking her pale cheek tenderly.

"Certainly," she replied, nervously. She glanced at the clock. It was still five minutes to eleven. "Wanda was here just now," she continued. "Wiliszewski will give a recitation of his poems upstairs to-morrow, and she invited me to attend, but I declined."

"You were wrong. Prudence alone should have advised you to act differently. Not as one who has committed an unpardonable sin; you cannot become a nun all at once. To please--"

"Father," she said, beseechingly. "If you only knew--"

"I do know. But you will please accept, Judith."

She was silent; it was a command, against which there was no appeal. A carriage stopped, and some "hurrahs" were heard outside. Judith's cheeks flushed purple.

"It is the count," said Nathaniel. He hastened to meet the young man, and bowed his gray head as if welcoming a prince.

"May God bless your entrance!" he said, pathetically, yet cordially. "May he reward your generosity. I cannot express myself in words, but--"

"But, Herr Trachtenberg," Agenor said, remonstratingly. His glance rested on Judith, who stood near, pale and trembling.

"I hope you, are not ill?" he cried.

"No--"

"I was afraid--the result of that excitement."

She was embarrassed, and he felt awkward, very much because this pale girl was such a contrast to the vision which had been present to his imagination.

Her father took her hand.

"Are you not going to thank our most gracious count?" he asked. "Please excuse the child," he added--"the recollection of this most painful episode. She can generally find an answer."

"Herr von Wolczinski has learned that. But thanks are unnecessary in this case. Any one would have acted as I did. It is a duty I must have fulfilled towards any lady."

Judith's face brightened. "Any lady?" she repeated, hastily.

"Assuredly." Then he comprehended her meaning. "I knew you were--"

"A Jewess--yes!" she broke in. "But would you have done as much for any Jewess? I mean, if I had been old and ugly--"

"Judith!" exclaimed Nathaniel. "What are you saying?" He seemed beside himself. The count, too, was taken aback. "What coarse flirting!" he thought. But the painful quivering of her lips contradicted that.

Her father's ejaculation showed her how her question might be misinterpreted. She blushed

painfully. "No, no!" she cried, her eyes filling with tears. "*Mon Dieu!* I only mean--"

She could not finish. Herr von Wroblewski and the Rittmeister entered, followed closely by Herr Severin, his son, and cousin Jan.

The comedy was enacted as prescribed in the programme. Wladko stammered the words written for him by Herr von Wroblewski. The count gave his explanation. Jan expressed the opinion that Wladko had no longer an occasion for hurt feelings, and the gentlemen shook hands. It lasted but three minutes.

Judith stood motionless. "No wonder," said Herr Severin, as he left the room with his following to the Rittmeister. "She is quite stupefied with the honor." She pulled herself together when the count made preparations to leave.

"Most gracious count," she began, with shaking voice, clasping her hands involuntarily. "Do not think, when I began before--no, you would be doing me injustice. But--I do not know if you understand me--but that you, the principal gentleman here, whose society every one regards as an honor, should--" Her voice was stifled in tears.

He felt as if dreaming--seeing the poor, beautiful girl trembling before him, with upraised hands, and the emotions wakened in his heart made him understand this tangled stammering.

"It would console you," he asked, "if I should answer your former question quite candidly? You would then see that this prejudice is not shared--" He was silent--"by us all," he was about to add; but, as an honest man, he could not say it, for he had that prejudice.

"Yes, yes," she cried.

"Well, then, I would have done the same for anybody of your creed, as Herr von Wroblewski can bear witness. He asked me the same question the day before yesterday, and received the same answer."

The magistrate had been listening breathlessly. "It is so, 'pon my honor."

"Thanks! thanks!" Judith murmured, and before the count could hinder she had seized his hand and kissed it.

As Agenor was about to enter his carriage the next minute, the magistrate said, "Will you do me a great favor, my dear count? Wiliszenski, the poet, whom perhaps you know by reputation, is to read us his latest verses quite *en famille*. As yet there are only five of us, for my wife always invites Judith, though the girl does not seem to care for the poet, preferring to spend the evening alone with the albums, in the next room. May we hope to see you?"

He looked inquiringly into the count's face. The contemptuous glance which he encountered did not disturb him. In fact, he smiled.

The count dropped his eyes. There he stood, his hand on the carriage door, a picture of indecision.

"I regret," he said, finally, "I am engaged for tomorrow evening."

"What a pity!" exclaimed Wroblewski.

The carriage rolled away; he watched it smilingly, and the same smile was on his lips when he went to his wife, and said, "Six guests to-morrow evening."

CHAPTER III.

Thaddeus von Wiliszenski was, with some exceptions, a Polish Walter von der Vogelweide. He, too, gained less by his learning than by his genius; he, too, wandered from castle to castle, exhorting the nobles to justice--rejoicing when he received a new coat or negotiated a loan, for I doubt if any one ever borrowed so much.

Like Walter, he was a political poet, though not a one-sided one, like the German singer. He read stirring war-songs against Austria to the nobles, and then, by order of the magistracy, composed odes for the emperor's birthday. For the burghers he wrote lampoons against the nobles; for the nobles, skits against the *bourgeoisie*.

He, too, belonged to the later nobility, for though a "von" was under his poems and a coat-of-

arms on his writing-paper, it was difficult to trace his genealogy. Some, indeed, said he was the son of a shoemaker, and had failed in the gymnasium; others, that he had been a barber's apprentice.

It was equally difficult to ascertain his birthplace. Several provinces strove about declining the honor. He was in the habit of saying he was the son of that neighborhood in which he happened to be collecting subscriptions, just at the time, for his poems. If the book had ever appeared, a large edition would have been required, for one could scarcely count the numbers from whom he had collected its price of three gulden. But, like the Minnesänger, he contented himself with leaving it oral.

Uninvited, and suddenly as if dropped from the skies, he would appear at the farm-houses. Sometimes he was kicked out after three, sometimes after eight days' sojourn, for he never departed of his own volition. But as one cannot live by poetry alone, he also acted as mediator when bribery or some equally dirty business was on hand, which accounted for his friendship with Von Wroblewski.

It was, then, in honor of this son of the muse that Lady Anna had made this little party. There sat Wiliszewski, his long, tangled, sandy curls in greater confusion than usual, while he declaimed poems in honor of the great ones of the land. It had been long since he had reckoned a count among his hearers, and he concluded that Agenor having come, notwithstanding he had at first declined the invitation, it was because of his interest in the poet. How gratifying, then, the close attention which this wealthy man accorded him!

He was reading an historical ballad--"The Bloody Day;" the hero was a Poniatowski, but the poet read it Baranowski, since it scanned equally well. His breast was overflowing with a strong current of poetical inspiration. "May the devil fetch me, if that is not worth fifty gulden to me!"

When he had finished, all were silent. He was unable to see the faces of his auditors, for Lady Anna had so placed the lamp-shade that the light fell only on the manuscript. But deep silence was the highest of all praise.

"Wonderful!" ejaculated the lady of the house. The jingle of the verses had swept her ear without conveying a meaning. She had been watching the count as he sat there motionless and awkward as a boy. A sigh heaved her ample bosom. "What a magnificent fellow! And all this for that Jewish girl!"

"Yes, very good indeed," said the count, rousing himself from his brown study.

"Especially the descriptions of the landscape," remarked the magistrate.

"What landscape?" inquired Judith, in surprise. She alone had followed the poem, hoping thereby to regain her self-possession and quiet her wildly beating heart. She had come in obedience to her father's wishes when she heard the count had refused to come, but when he walked in so unexpectedly she felt as though she must fly--fly from herself.

Herr von Wroblewski pretended not to have heard the gentle interruption. "And these people!" he exclaimed, enthusiastically. "One can really see them! And the feeling!" he added, cautiously. "There must have been some such stupid rubbish," he thought. Then he gave his daughter a signal, and she slipped out of the room unperceived.

"Our Thaddeus is a master mind," he exclaimed. "Some of his ballads rival Mickowicz, *parole d'honneur!* And he is so versatile! After what he has just read, you would class him among sentimental poets. But now, Thaddeus, give us those songs--'Venus in her Night-gown!'"

It was a collection of very ambiguous poems, which, at the last recitation, had driven Judith into another room. She could not understand what had so amused the rest of the company, but her instinct had warned her that they were unfit for her ears.

"Perhaps later on," said the poet; "but now I should like to read the 'Ballad of King Casimir and the Beautiful Esther.'"

"What are you thinking of?" cried Wroblewski, anxiously, for he knew it was a ribald poem against the Jews.

"Let it be!" said Thaddeus. "You have not heard the new version." For, since several Jewish farmers in Eastern Galicia had proven their interest in Polish literature by showing him hospitality for a few days, he had transformed entirely the story of Casimir the Great and his Jewish mistress. "That will fit in splendidly to-day," he thought, "and I may perhaps receive one hundred gulden!" For he had heard of the scene in the ballroom, and the character of his host was a guarantee that Judith and the count had not been brought together on this occasion by accident.

He began to read; the first verses quieted the apprehensions of the head of the house. The former version had shown what a pestilence the Jewish element had been in Poland, but this showed how the chosen people of the Old Testament had found a sanctuary in the poet's native land; and how Casimir, for love of the beautiful Esther, had granted charters to the Jews, and

finally made a queen of his beloved. The poem closed with an ardent appeal to charity and fraternity.

Again all was still. "Excellent!" murmured the host, glancing at the count. Entranced, he gazed at the excited face of the beautiful girl opposite him. Judith did not notice him. Breathing deeply, she sat with eyes half closed, buried in thought, carried away by the emotions aroused by the poem. She had never before heard of the beautiful Esther. It was a revelation that the boundaries which she had felt so bitterly the past few days had not been set by nature; that there had been a time when they had not existed; that there had been a queen of Poland who had been a Jewess, and that it had been neither forbidden by God nor hindered by man. And then again she experienced that not inscrutable emotion which had stirred within her since the event of the ballroom; though, to be sure, a count was not a king, but-- She aroused herself as if to shake off these thoughts, and met the fixed fiery gaze of the count. She started, and, blushing deeply, arose as if to take flight.

"Admirable!" Wroblewski repeated, with sincerity. "But now I must manage to arrange a private chat," he added to himself.

"Now, my dear poet, please let us have the Venus songs." He grinned like a faun. "They are splendid count, I assure you."

The poet put out his hand for the dilapidated manuscript, for these poems were the ones most in demand; but the count interfered. "I think," he said, decidedly, "we had better ask Herr von Wiliszenski for something else better fitted for the ears of ladies."

There was nothing more to be said; so a ghastly but insignificant ballad was read, after which supper was announced, which passed off very quietly. Judith and the count were silent, and the poet also; for, to his idea, conversation at such a supper was a sinful waste of time, and of opportunity which did not present itself every day. Wroblewski had therefore to carry on the entire conversation himself; for his wife was in a bad humor, as she did not approve of her husband's plans in the slightest, but quite the contrary.

As she looked at the dreamy young girl, an idea, and a good one, so it seemed, struck her. "Judith," she said, laughingly, "you are not eating! Has it touched you so deeply that Wiliszenski made the beautiful Esther a queen?"

The probe went deeper than she expected. The girl started, and changed color. "Did she not become one?" she asked, almost under her breath.

Lady Anna laughed aloud. "Did you really believe it?"

"Why not?" exclaimed her husband, with an angry glance. "I believe it. It was so, was it not, my dear Wiliszenski?"

The poet's mouth was so full just then that it was impossible to respond immediately. An equivocal answer seemed wisest. He swallowed hastily. "Some chroniclers say so."

"The most reliable," affirmed Wroblewski, energetically.

"Do come to my aid," said Lady Anna to the count. "I have always read that she was only the king's mistress."

The count hesitated, but only for a second. "So she was," he said. "Our poet knows the old chroniclers better than I do, no doubt; but his poem would scarcely hold its own against the facts brought to light in modern research. It has been proven that Casimir the Great opened his land to the Jews for precisely the same reason as he did to the Germans--that the middle class, which was lacking, might be created. It is certain that the beautiful Esther fascinated him for a longer period than did his other *amies*, but history has never allowed her much influence over his actions."

"With due respect to your information," said the magistrate, "I must say I have often read the contrary, 'pon my honor, very often! You will, at least, allow that Casimir loved the Jewess better than he did any Christian?"

"Certainly, they all assert that," Agenor answered.

They rose from the table and retired to the drawing-room. Wanda and Judith sat down to look at some albums. Lady Anna entangled the count in a conversation, while the poet took possession of the host. But the latter listened abstractedly, though Wiliszenski was unfolding a business scheme.

The magistrate had caused the arrest of a scoundrel of good family for cheating. Thaddeus portrayed eloquently the grief of his relatives, on account of his having disgraced the Franciscan monastery, where he had been serving his novitiate. They now proposed to send him to Russia, and wished to avoid public sentence of guilt; it would hurt them so keenly.

"All right," responded the magistrate. "I am not a monster; but we will talk of it after a while."

Now go into the smoking-room."

The poet obeyed. Wanda vanished at her father's nod; and Lady Anna, who did not dare to cross his plans for a second time that day, also withdrew, though unwillingly.

"Now, my dear count," said the magistrate, with a glance at Judith, "I must beg you to excuse me, too."

"But, Herr von Wroblewski--" Agenor began.

"What is it you wish?"

"I must say I do not approve of the way in which--" He paused, although his host stood before him, with drooping eyes, like a penitent sinner.

"Don't scold me," Wroblewski said. "Do not spoil my pleasure in seeing you here, although so unexpectedly." He bowed, and left the room.

The count bit his lips, and looked hesitatingly, first after him and then at Judith. She stared at the book which lay before her. The lamp-light shone on her auburn hair and delicate rosy face. He drew a deep breath, and stepped up to her.

She glanced up at his approach, and when she saw they were alone she seemed ready to run.

"What is interesting you so?" he asked, as unconcernedly as he could, looking at the engraving open before her. "Heidelberg? A splendid town! My regiment was in Mayence for some time, and I often ran over to Heidelberg."

"My brother is going there to stay," said Judith.

The count inquired why Raphael had not attended an Austrian high-school, to which she replied that it was Bergheimer's advice, who had so strongly recommended the law schools of Heidelberg; that her father had the greatest confidence in Bergheimer, and had intrusted to him the education of both her brother and herself. The count then asked in what subjects she had been taught, and the methods of instruction, so that, if the magistrate had been eavesdropping, the conversation would not have interested him much.

But after a time it took a more important turn. She told him Bergheimer was a zealous botanist, and had made a good herbarium of plants, special to Eastern Galicia.

"Then I suppose the gardens of the castle interested him?" said Agenor.

"Certainly. Though he was never there."

"Why not?"

"He was not allowed. Admission is forbidden to Jews, as you will see on the board at the entrance. But do not think this embittered him. He always said: 'It is not the fault of the count; such a board stands on the park-gates of every castle in Podolia. If they should be removed, it would create great gossip.' Bergheimer is such a noble, gentle creature. He never dreamed of an exception being made in his favor, although he is so fond of flowers. 'Perhaps the gardener would allow it,' he used to say, 'but I do not wish for any advantages above my brethren.' And he was right."

"Then you, too, have never been in the garden?"

"Yes," she answered, blushing deeply. "I have often been there with Wanda and the burgomaster's daughters, and occasionally alone. The custodians know me, but they said nothing, and I was weak enough to be glad of it. I fancied I was superior to the others. But I have atoned! How I felt when I recognized--"

"By that scene in this house," he said, interrupting her. "I have only known since yesterday what an impression it must have made upon you, and a wrong one. Fräulein Judith! Believe me, this gulf--"

She listened intently, but he came to a stand. No, he could not, he ought not, lie.

"Well, the gulf?"

"Is not so deep, after all. But why talk about it? Your brother, then, is in Heidelberg!"

A sad smile played around her lips. "You are an honest man, Count Baranowski. Once before this evening you alone had the courage to speak the truth. Now I understand why I never heard of the beautiful Esther from either my father or Raphael or Bergheimer."

"And why not?"

Her face glowed. "She was an outcast."

"A hard judgment! Just think how Casimir loved her."

"I do not believe it. Perhaps I ought not to talk about it. It does not seem quite proper. But yet why should I be silent? If he had really loved her, he would have made her his wife; or if this was not possible, since he was a king and she a Jewess, then he should have kept away from her, and not brought her to shame--the worst of fates. For if her name is ever spoken among us Jews, it would be as disgraced."

"I do not know about that," he answered. "Any one with human feelings ought not to condemn her so mercilessly, even had Casimir not been a king. Suppose she loved him with all her heart?"

Judith shook her head.

"You do not believe it?"

"I don't know;" she was confused, but conquered herself, and continued bravely: "At least I have never heard of such love among ourselves. My parents, for instance; no one could have found a happier pair, yet they were introduced to each other at their betrothal. And this is generally the case. I think we must be different in this regard from other races."

"Do you really believe so?" he exclaimed. "For then nature herself has formed the gulf. But I think you are mistaking cause for effect. Isolation and the clinging to ancient usages have brought your people to it. When I see you standing before me, I think--"

"Please do not talk of me," she implored, in such a piteous tone that he became silent instantly.

"How quiet!" said a laughing voice during the unpleasant pause. It was Lady Anna.

The following day, as Judith entered the dining-room at the dinner-hour, her father came to meet her. "A letter from our dear ones!" he exclaimed, "from Breslau. They have journeyed that far without pausing, but they propose to remain there a week before crossing Saxony and Bavaria to the Neckar. Only think, Bergheimer has found our old pupil from Mayence in Breslau. He is a banker, named Berthold Wertheimer, and Bergheimer cannot laud him enough. I have written to Raphael, and told him of the generous conduct of our count. How much he and the others of our co-religionists have misjudged the man!"

"What conduct?" inquired Judith.

"Have you not heard of it yet? The whole town is talking of it. The sign-board at the entrance of the castle gardens has been removed, and he has notified the heads of the congregation in a very pleasant letter. I suppose you will wish to add something to this letter to Raphael. He sends you his love, and says: 'Judith's promise at our parting to remember our last conversation makes me very happy.' What does he mean by that?"

"Nothing," she murmured. "Only childishness!"

"I thought so; but you are surely not well, my child? You are so pale!"

CHAPTER IV.

It was three weeks later; a mild, bright October day. The landscape is scantily blessed with that beauty which in more favored countries delights the heart of man. Limitless plains surround us on all sides, from which gently swelling billows of earth occasionally elevate themselves above the dead level, only to sink back into it again. Brooks and rivers roll their muddy, sluggish waters between miry banks, from their birthplace in the distant mountains to the lower and drearier steppe country, while here and there a streamlet is sucked up by the thick turf, or dammed into a pond, whose broad, turbid mirror reflects the reed of the small boggy islands and the pale, misty blue of the firmament.

The small towns, where the Jews, the outcast chosen people (chosen, it would seem, for unspeakable miseries), live huddled together in crowded groups of wretched huts, are poor and dirty. More pitiful still are the villages, where the Ruthene, sullen and fierce, ploughs the land under the lash of the Pole.

Here and there are tiny plantations of birch-trees; but one may wander over heath for miles and miles, where little grows but the juniper and nothing blooms but the heather.

The winter is fearful, when the storms from the north drive the snow across the vast plains.

Short and scanty is the spring, and parching the heat of summer; but the autumn, gentle and bright, revives the hearts of the poor and refreshes the barren land. The heath takes on a vivid crimson blush, the woods a darker tinge; the deep blue of the sky is intensified by the greater purity of the atmosphere; and even the stubble-field becomes a thing of beauty, with the transparent spider-webs floating over it like a bridal veil.

The soothing calm of the autumnal day had its influence upon Count Agenor, as he rode slowly homeward over the steppe, the air vibrating with the music of the noonday bells. He started off early in the morning, after a sleepless night, during which he had been tossed and shaken as by spirits of evil.

That had come to pass which was inevitable after he had yielded to the tempter and gone to the Wiliszewski recital. Since then, thanks to the ingenuity of the magistrate, he had often met the beautiful Jewess alone, and knew now he had no need to ask her whether she comprehended that sensation which Christians call love.

Since yesterday, too, he felt he no longer required the medium so obnoxious to him; for Judith had been in the park alone, had fallen on his breast; his arm had clasped her youthful form, his lips had dared to touch hers. And she had promised to go again, and he knew she would keep her word.

True, he did not expect to attain his desire to-day; weeks might elapse before he wakened the passion in her which raged in his veins. But the hour must come when she would be his. Yet this certainly did not make him happy. Quite the contrary. Never before had he felt so sad.

For, as she had said, he was an honest man. The handsome Uhlan officer had enjoyed almost everything that the beauty of woman could offer him. But on one point his conscience was clear. He had enticed no wife from her husband's side; he had brought no girl to misery. This was to be partly attributed to his exquisite sense of the requirements of his noble birth, partly to the subjection he was still under to his late father's wishes.

This clever and good man had early recognized that, in spite of many noble qualities, his son was lacking in that which was most important for the head of an impoverished branch of a noble house; that is, energy of character and the power to say "no." So, with the best of motives, he had striven to maintain and increase his influence over him. It was principally owing to this that Agenor had always so scrupulously held himself above reproach, until the death of his father made him the head of the family. Never had a lie passed his lips. But now he had lied and cheated, and if he wished to attain his desires he must continue to do so.

The young count had won Judith because she thought him noble and knightly, and free from prejudices against her nation. She trusted entirely in his love and honor. One word about the gulf that divided them, one intimation of the impossibility of making her his wife, and she was lost to him forever. As yet she had said nothing to him about the future--but if she did? And even if she did not, and he kept silence, or was only ambiguous in his speech, would it rest any less lightly on his conscience?

But, aside from all this, Agenor did not merely lust after the Jewess, but loved her with his whole heart. He often questioned himself as to how it happened, but never found an answer. Certainly her beauty had at first inflamed his senses; but that was not all. She was so pure, so noble in her pride, so touching in her submission, so pitiable in the way she felt her position.

But this could not explain the mystery which had taken possession of his heart. "Perhaps," he sometimes thought, "it is only pity, or horror of the fate towards which I am leading her, if I continue so weak."

This fate seemed gloomy enough to him. "She is not a girl who would accommodate herself to the position of a kept mistress, or would be shrewd enough to save her reputation by marriage with another man." Through the anxious nights he thought, with horror, "She cannot survive it! You will be her murderer!" With feverish pulses he paced up and down his bedroom till, quite worn out, he sank again into his chair. But the voice of his conscience kept repeating, through the stillness of the night, "Her murderer! if your weakness is not overcome."

Could he give her up? It seemed impossible; more impossible than ever, now when every nerve of his body tingled with feverish, almost painful desire. Could he make her his wife? "Rather die!" he said to himself; and, as he sat there brooding over it, there seemed but one thing equal to the disgrace of placing Judith Trachtenberg's name in the line of his pedigree, and that was the committing a base action.

The dawn found him absorbed in these confused, antagonistic ideas. He had his horse saddled, and galloped away across the heath, without rest, without aim; then dropped the reins, and, as he rode slowly back over the plain, from which the morning mists were rising, he became more composed in body and mind. He had viewed things too gloomily in the silence of this painful night, and he tried to strengthen himself in this opinion by a thousand subterfuges. But there was one idea that he could not coax himself to tolerate--that of a nobleman taking to his arms a girl of inferior birth, and she, after years of separation, meeting with a new love and a husband.

Still, though Agenor could not make her his wife, he could make this proud, beautiful creature

the companion of his life; and was this such a disgraceful position that she would reject it with scorn? She would not, if she loved him as the old chroniclers said Esther did the king. He would be perfectly frank, and tell her she could count on his love and fidelity, but not on his hand. He resolved upon this as he rode home across the glowing heather. He would neither commit a crime against her nor violate his conscience; and should she tear herself away from him, he must find strength to endure it. If any one doubts the possibility of renunciation, let him go to the moorlands in autumn to learn it.

With a pacified conscience and filled with good resolves, he reached home. As he entered the courtyard he frowned angrily. The magistrate's britzka stood before the door. His interviews with this man were growing more and more painful; each time Wroblewski became more insolent and more familiar, and, in his present frame of mind, nothing could be more unpleasant than a meeting with his "faithful aid."

He met his unwelcome guest in the breakfast-room. "You see," shouted the latter, "I make myself quite at home; I have even ordered Jan to put a plate for me."

Agenor nodded, sat down, and invited him by a wave of the hand to help himself. "And to what am I indebted for this pleasure?" he asked, abruptly.

"You don't appear to consider it much of a pleasure," the official said, playfully, filling his plate. "And wrongly, too! You really ought to be satisfied with me, or do you fancy you would have secured a meeting in the park without my assistance?"

"Don't speak in such a tone," said the young man. "So you know of that already."

"Oh, I know much more. My congratulations on the first kiss. Why, I was in the garden myself, 'pon my honor; and, 'pon my honor, quite accidentally, though it is not necessary to say that, for I am a chevalier and will keep quiet about it." The repetition of the word "honor" was not to be wondered at, as the whole story was a fabrication. He had not seen the couple himself, but his wife, impelled by curiosity and envy, had followed Judith, and had not only confided the result of her observations to him, but also to the wife of the burgomaster, a lady who filled a vacuum in the little town with rare zeal, as she took upon herself the functions of a local newspaper, in so far as her breath permitted. In this way it happened that every individual in the town above the age of ten years knew of it.

"Is this all you have to tell me?" inquired the count.

The magistrate grew pathetic. "I don't deserve that. I came with the very best intentions, and because I thought it necessary. I thought it possible you might wish to utilize the absence of old Trachtenberg, and so have appointed a rendezvous for to-day. I came to warn you. Yesterday I saw two Jewish girls wandering about who might have observed something. Don't forget the board has been taken down. It was noble of you and very like King Casimir, who opened all gates to the Jews at Esther's request. But take care! Her father has only gone to Tarnopol and will return to-day. Of course, I have no idea what progress you have made, but I should imagine an interference on the part of the father might spoil your little game."

The count felt himself blushing with shame. He was about to use some violent language, but had he not forfeited his right to do this?

"And now, my dear fellow," continued the magistrate, "I have a favor to ask for myself."

He hesitated. The count drew out his purse. "How much?"

"No, no, I do not mean that. It will only cost a kind word to a man who is dependent on you. I have got into a damnable fix, through pure good nature, 'pon my honor."

Agenor glanced at the clock. It was one, and in a half-hour he had an appointment with Judith in the park. "Well, tell me, and in as few words as possible."

"I suppose you remember the farmer on your estate at Syczkow. An Armenian, Bagdan Afanasiewicz? He was here when you came."

"Certainly; a stout man, with a long black beard. He was spoken of as a very good and pious man, but avaricious."

"Quite right. His avarice and piety have been my misfortune. About four months since--it was in June--a young priest, representing himself as on his way to a new cure, came to Syczkow, and asked for a night's lodging. The pious Bagdan received him hospitably, and when they were at supper mentioned the distress he was in because of the excessive drought, which nothing could relieve except a solemn procession. The vicar of Syczkow was ill, and the vicar of the adjacent village demanded twelve gulden for this service. The young priest offered to do it for five. The vicar loaned his cope, the procession took place, and rain fell the following day. As the stranger seemed to understand his business, Bagdan had his new barn blessed for another five gulden, and the peasants took the opportunity to have their children baptized at cheaper rates. After a week the young priest continued his journey, and if he had stayed away all parties would have been satisfied, and I should have kept out of a row."

"Well?" asked Agenor, impatiently, looking at the clock.

"You shall hear. He returned, and this aroused the suspicions of even Bagdan, for he remembered the priest had said he was to take charge of a parish. Besides, the vicar of Syczkow was well again, and had no inclination for having a competitor in his field. Inquiries were made, and they found he was a scamp, born in the district of Zolkier, of good family, to whom he had caused much trouble. He had acquired a certain amount of clerical hocus-pocus by having been a novice in a monastery, whence he was kicked out for sacrilege. Bagdan told me and several others upon whom he had tried the same game, and I had him arrested. But his brothers have sent a friend to me whose talents I esteem greatly, and who has much influence over me, the poet Wiliszenski; and he has prevailed upon me to give him his liberty because of his innocent family, they pledging themselves to send him to Russia. I was very loath to say yes, but it is so difficult to refuse anything to the amiable poet. The Armenian then said I had been bribed to release the fellow, who had not only cheated, but committed sacrilege into the bargain. I!-bribed! Then he sent an appeal to the government at Lemberg."

"But that can do you no harm," said the count, "your wife's uncle--"

"Has done his duty," broke in the magistrate, "and Bagdan received the reply he deserved. But his piety and avarice will not let him rest. The loss of his ten gulden and the blasphemy, as he calls it, grieve him, so that he is having an appeal drawn up by some pettifogger here to present to the archbishop of Lemberg. That I heard this morning. Now you know the state of things in Austria. An official can do much--but a cleric can do everything. If the archbishop receives this communication, there will be an investigation, and though my conscience is clear, yet--"

"I understand--I am to request Bagdan to let the matter drop. But how can I interfere? The man is quite right."

"A friend is asking your help," said the magistrate, energetically. "In such a case, one does not consider right and wrong. I have not in your case. The man's name is Ignatius Tondka. Please make a note of it and write to your farmer to-day."

Agenor turned his back, then walked hastily up and down the room. At last he drew out his note-book and wrote the name.

"My best thanks," exclaimed the magistrate. "Your letter will go off to-day, will it not? *Au revoir.*"

CHAPTER V.

Agenor was still under the excitement of this interview when he went to the appointment with Judith. "The reptile!" he muttered, as he descended the steps into the park, clenching his fists until the nails penetrated the flesh. "I must shake off this toad, who is defiling both Judith and myself."

But as he walked hurriedly through the rustling leaves towards the pine *allée*, the only one that could afford a shelter at this season of the year, his anger gradually evaporated, until he felt but one sensation, that of longing for Judith's sweet presence.

"I will tell her everything," he thought, "and she must choose for herself;" and the thought found expression in words even, but he felt he only uttered them to keep to his resolution. After he had waited a half-hour, there was only one word which he continually and hoarsely repeated, as if in a delirium--"Come! Come!"

At last he heard her swift step among the leaves, and caught sight of her dress glinting among the trees. She came hastily, with a glowing face. The lace mantilla she had wrapped about her head had become partly undone, and fluttered over her auburn hair.

"At last!" he murmured, rushing to meet her. She stood still, and when she saw his passionate face a trembling seized her limbs, and she stretched out her hands imploringly.

He scarcely observed it. "At last!" he repeated, catching the half-resisting girl in his arms, while his lips sought hers till he found them.

But only for a moment, for then she released herself. "Please do not make it harder for me than it is, for now it is bitter enough; but--"

"Why, what is the matter? You were not like this yesterday, you--"

"Then it is all right?" she asked, wiping her wet eyes and struggling to smile. "You have kissed me and we belong to each other for life."

This was said with such trust and earnestness that Agenor was touched to the quick. His arm dropped which was about to embrace her again.

"You dear love," he said, falteringly, "certainly we belong to each other. Nothing can part us again, Judith--nothing. And I shall do all that lies in my power to keep you from ever repenting it." He could safely promise that, for it was his firm resolve. "I love you as I never loved before."

A happy smile lit up her face, yet her eyes were filled with tears. "I believe you. Would I be here if I had one moment's doubt of your honor? Would I have come yesterday? No, I should be sitting in my own room, weeping my eyes out for my misfortune in loving a man who had no love for me--who would not make me his wife. And perhaps," she continued shrilly, "I could not endure life with such shame and misery at my heart."

"Judith," he said, startled, "what thoughts are these?"

"Silly ones, I know. But see how much has happened these past few days. I am quite changed. I do not think it ever occurred to any girl before. I have no control over my own heart; it commands me, and I must come to you and be caressed, and caress you in turn. It is the same with my thoughts. They roam about in wild confusion. I am only quiet when I think of you. For I know you--"

"And yet," he said, looking at her tenderly, "you must have wept much since yesterday!"

"Are you surprised?" She asked this with a sorrowful smile. "Remember, my father and brother love me, and I love them. How startled they will be when you ask for my hand, and how it will distress them for me to become a Christian! Perhaps I may lose their hearts forever. They may never wish to have any more to do with me. You do not know what it means with us to change our faith. In our parish there is a poor old widow, Miriam Gold, who earns her living as a nurse. Her husband was a village publican, and her only daughter fell in love with a peasant, became a Christian, and married him. The father died of grief at the disgrace and from the sneers of our co-religionists, and the mother leads a wretched life. Had my father not interfered in her behalf, she would have perished. She, too, has cast off her daughter, and scarcely ever mentions her. She herself told me to-day that she had not spoken of her for years."

The count listened, his mind filled with contending emotions. "What, to-day?" he asked, in surprise.

"Just now. The reason I was so late was that she begged me to allow her to tell her story. Perhaps," drawing a deep breath--"perhaps it was no coincidence. She knows my position, and wishes to warn me. If so, my father may hear of it, and that would be a bad thing. Honesty demands he should hear it from us first, not from others. If you preferred, I could tell him myself."

"I must have time for consideration," replied the count. "I should like to spare you needless strife."

"Be upright," whispered his conscience. "You are a scoundrel if you are silent now." But how could he do it, and how would she receive it? Only just now she had said: "Perhaps I could not endure to go on living."

"Needless quarrels simply embitter the life," he resumed, mechanically. "See, Judith, how I love you."

"I know it, and because I know it I will be still, and leave it to you as to how and when you will speak with my father. Of course, if he asks me, I must tell him the truth. You must surely realize it is hard for me; and since you love me, you must not expect to meet me in secret. If you only knew how I felt yesterday and to-day before I came. I knew it was not right, and I felt the shame burning my cheeks, and the bright daylight hurt me. Still, I came--I had to. I was drawn as if with chains; for I love you, I love you!"

As she stood before him, her glowing, face drooping over her heaving bosom, he lost what little self-possession he had, and his conscience was deadened by the rushing of blood in his ears. He pressed her to him, covering head, face, and clothes with kisses, till after a few minutes she tore herself away.

"I have tolerated it," she said, breathlessly, "because it is the last time before your formal proposal. Farewell!"

"May I not accompany you?" he begged, endeavoring to pass his arm about her shoulders.

She shook her head in silence, and hurried away. Once again she looked back. He stood as she had left him, gazing after her with ravening eyes. She waved her handkerchief, and hastened on. As she passed into the street which led through the town to her home, she hesitated. It seemed impossible to go along under everybody's eyes; it seemed as if every one must see the kisses that

still burned on her cheeks. She slipped into a foot-path that led along in the rear of the houses, sat down on a bench, and gave full vent to the tears that rained down her face. This soothed her, and she went on her way, entering the house by the back door.

Her father's carriage was standing in the court-yard, so he had probably returned. The old servant, who had carried her in her arms, met her in the hall. Poor old Sarah was very white, and trembled in every limb. "There you are at last!" she almost screamed, wringing her hands. "O God! merciful God! why did you let me live to see this come to pass?"

Judith, too, grew white as the wall, against which she leaned. But the weakness passed away in a moment, and she asked: "Where is my father?"

"In the reception-room. But you cannot see him yet. The burgomaster is there, and is telling him the whole story. I have just heard it from the magistrate's cook. Oh! child, what--"

"You will let me know when he is alone," interrupted Judith; and she went to her room.

She had to wait a long time; in her present state of mind it was an intolerably long time. For the burgomaster was a good old simpleton, so he thought it expedient to tell Nathaniel what all the town knew; and he was also a gifted orator. Therefore, he began with a discourse on friendship, followed by another on the corrupt morals of recent times, until finally the poor old father discovered the drift of the whole. It was ghastly to see him sitting in his arm-chair, pale as death, and motionless, except when he occasionally passed his hand over his silvery beard.

"Thanks," he said, when the speaker had at last ended. His voice was hoarse, but otherwise he spoke slowly and deliberately as usual. "You have intended for the best. But now for the chief point. Did your wife herself see that kiss in the garden?"

"No, Frau von Wroblewski."

"And you only tell me that now?" cried Trachtenberg, almost gayly. He really succeeded in forcing a laugh. "A reliable witness! That quiets me. I was never in much doubt, for I know my child. I can willingly believe she went for a walk in the park; that she met the count, who accosted her politely, and received a polite answer. The rest is a lie. I, as her father, am sure of that."

"Well, if you, Pani Trachtenberg--"

"Yes; I, her father! Please repeat this to everyone who cares to hear it."

He accompanied his astounded guest to the door, and then returned to his arm-chair. There he sank down and buried his face in his hands, where he lay motionless, not hearing, in his wild grief, the gentle, hesitating step which came into the room. It was only when Judith dared to touch his hand that he was aroused.

"Father," she said, with faltering voice. "Do not be angry with me. I know it was another happiness you had planned for me, but I did not choose this myself. It came upon me unawares."

"Silence!" he yelled, flinging her hand from off his. His wrath at her daring to speak to him almost robbed him of consciousness. "Happiness!" he repeated. "What rubbish are you talking?"

"My happiness," she answered, gently but firmly. "For I love him, and he will make me his wife."

The old man jumped up suddenly. His eyes became rigid and seemed standing out of their sockets; his lips quivered, and he held out his hands as if to defend himself. "A--ah!" he groaned. The next instant he had caught her by both hands, and dragged her to the window into the full light. His eyes sought hers and held them fast, his gaze sinking deeper and deeper into hers. He breathed with difficulty; there was a gurgling in his throat, but no words came in this anguish of soul. The question to which he demanded an answer lay in his glazed and terrified eyes.

She bore the stare, the color mounting higher and higher in her pale face, until neck and brow were suffused with a vivid purple; but her eyelids never drooped. She understood the silent question conveyed by the horror in his eyes, and she answered it in the same silent manner.

He drew a deep, deep breath, and let her hands fall. "Tell me," he commanded, abruptly.

She hesitated.

"Have I not the right?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, perhaps, but I am not sure. Father, I do not know myself how it has come about. I did not wish it, but I was forced into it, and perhaps it was the same with him. But his intentions are honorable."

"We will hear of that later. Go on."

She told, at first in confused, indistinct words, how she had met his eyes at the entrance into

the town, and what a tumult of emotions his conduct had awakened in her the evening of the ball. But as she passed on to the conversation after Wiliszewski's reading, she overcame her fears, and she told everything as she knew it--the whole truth.

He stood with his forehead pressed against the window, and listened quietly, interrupting her but once. As she was telling him of other meetings at Wroblewski's house, he asked suddenly: "And you did not observe you were always alone?"

"No, I supposed it was a--"

"A coincidence!" he said, mockingly, shaking his clenched fist at the ceiling. "But go on."

He sank down in his arm-chair again, while she sat by him, and finished her story, not even suppressing the conversation of that day.

"Father," she concluded, piteously, "I have never forgotten, and never can forget, how much I grieve you and Raphael. Therefore I can never be fully happy. But you are clever and good, and must see that I cannot help it." She knelt at his feet and clasped his knees. "Father, don't be angry with me!"

He sat still for a long time without moving. Then he felt gently for her hands, and loosed them from his knees, rose, and, going to the window, looked into the street over which the twilight of a late autumn day was sinking. Now and then he muttered to himself: "And I, fool that I am, often bewailed your early death! It was good for you!" Then he said aloud: "Your mother--" Then he stopped again.

He stood in that attitude, and it grew darker and darker in the room. Finally he pulled himself together, lit the candles on the table, and went to his child, who was still on her knees, her head resting against the chair.

"Stand up!" he ordered, going up close to her.

She obeyed. She attempted to look him in the eye, but could not, she was so shocked to see how suddenly old his face had grown. But his voice no longer quavered.

"It is a heavy misfortune," he said. "I thank God with all my heart that he has not utterly undone us; but what he has sent is fearful enough. I am not blaming you. You ought not to have had any secrets from me; but you are so young, and he is handsome and a count. If I accuse you, I ought also to accuse myself. I ought to have considered the character of the people I was sending you among, and how their influence would affect you. I ought to have been more clever, as clever as my poor boy, whose heart would break if he knew of this. But he shall never know it--never!"

She made a motion as if to speak.

"Never!" he repeated. "Listen, Judith! I know that madness blinds your eyes to-day, and deafens your ears. You will not understand what I am going to tell you. The wall here would comprehend it better. But you ought to feel that it is your father who thinks so, who loves you more than his own life, and who will not change his opinion. You are never to see or speak to the people up-stairs or to the count. You are to remain in your own room, and not to leave it without my orders. It would be best for me to have the horses harnessed and take you to the house from which I just came--my sister Recha's, in Tarnopol. She is a clever woman, your aunt Recha, and understands the management of sick people. But that will not be possible before the close of the week. Otherwise, this story would spread the more."

"Father," she implored, "do not ruin me!"

"Others wished to do that, and were in the best way to accomplish their purpose; but I, your father, will save you. Whether the count is a scoundrel, who is calculating on it in cold blood, and has hired that other scoundrel up-stairs to help him, or whether he is only a weak man, who, in the turmoil of passion, has tolerated the assistance of the wretch, I do not know; but it is all the same, as in either case your fate would have been a fearful one."

"Do not insult him!" she cried. "He is good and true! Ask him, if you doubt it, or listen to him when he comes to ask for my hand."

"I can safely promise that," he replied, bitterly; "for he will not come. And I shall certainly not ask him, because I already know the answer, and will not have it said of me: 'The old man lost his senses in despair, and actually implored the count to make the lost girl his wife.'"

"But if he should come?"

"Then I should say, 'No! no! no!' as long as there was breath in my body, in order to save you from unhappiness. For fire and water will not mix quietly, and a woman who is a curse to her husband is the most wretched creature on earth. If Count Agenor Baranowski was really insane enough to marry my daughter, he would be morally dead. There would be a three months' delirium, and then a life of misery, and you deserve a better fate. Not another word," he

continued, imperiously, as she was about to speak. "You have had to hear my will to-day, though as yet you cannot understand me."

She stepped forward and raised her hands imploringly. He silently shook his head. Her arms fell, and she staggered from the room, her entire body quivering with emotion. He looked after her sadly, and even after the door closed his eyes were fixed in that direction.

So the old servant found him. She brought the letters that had accumulated during his absence, and asked if he wanted his supper. He declined it, and tried to read the letters. It was impossible. Only one interested him. It was from Bergheimer's old pupil, Berthold Wertheimer, in Breslau, who informed him, in well-measured sentences, that he was passing through Galicia on business, and would give himself the pleasure of calling upon him.

"That is done for, too," sighed the old man, painfully. "I shall consider myself happy if the poor child is cured in a year or two."

Brooding over these troubles, he failed to hear a knock at the door, and only looked up when the visitor stood before him. It was Herr von Wroblewski. With a sorrowful air, he reached out his hand. "Pani Nathaniel," he said, softly, "I have heard you are in trouble and sorrow. The faithful friend should not be missing."

The old man's face worked, but he controlled himself. He did not accept the proffered hand, but his voice was quiet as he asked, "And what has the faithful friend to tell me?"

"*Mon Dieu!* how you look at me! as if I were to blame. You do me injustice, 'pon my honor! Not one compromising word passed between the young people in my house, and I was dumb with surprise when I heard of the affair."

"Indeed!" said the Jew, still coldly and deliberately. "But you surely do not expect me to believe this? Why this comedy? What is it you wish from me?"

"Pani Nathaniel, you hurt me! It was only our old friendship, 'pon my honor! Then, too, I am compromised, in a way. You may treat me as you like, but I will do my duty. As a man of honor and as your friend, I will go to-morrow, or to-day, if you wish, and will say to the count: 'You were introduced to this young girl in my house, and I have the right to remind you that you are about to commit an outrage against an honorable family. I beg of you to discontinue the attempt.' Yes, I will do it."

"Very well, do what you cannot avoid doing."

"But, are you not willing? It is the only way to influence the count. And you could not find a better go-between."

"Certainly not more honest. But I require no go-between in this affair. I have forbidden my daughter ever to speak, even one syllable, to the count, you, or your ladies. As she is a good child and a Jewess, brought up to obey her father, she will do as I say, though it may be hard for her."

Herr von Wroblewski smiled. "But is not that as the old proverb says, 'emptying out the spoons with the slops'? Perhaps the count will say, 'I am serious in this, and wish to marry the girl.' It is possible."

"That would not make the least difference. I should say 'no,' and Judith knows it. Not because I have any feeling against Christians, but because it would be certain misery for both." He arose.

"That is surely not your final word? You will not refuse the hand of an old friend?"

"Yes," said the Jew, abruptly. "I do not think the less of you for coming," he continued, in a tone of the utmost contempt, "for every one must act according to his principles. Your principles, both private and public, allow you to be convinced by both sides. You have been convinced by the count; now you wish to be by me also. But I decline."

Wroblewski changed color. His face was distorted by rage and hate. With difficulty he restrained himself. "But, Pani Nathaniel, some one must have libelled me to you. The burgomaster perhaps-- Oh! if you only knew how his wife-- It really grieves me to part with you in such a state of mind."

"Yet you will be obliged to do it," said Trachtenberg, quietly, pointing to the door, "otherwise I shall have to call my coachman."

When the magistrate was again in the dark passage, he was forced to hold to the door-posts, he was so overcome with rage.

"You shall pay for that," he groaned, "yes, pay for it," and he reiterated it at least ten times. He then went into the street, where he walked up and down meditating. At last he had made up his mind. "That would be the very best plan, but it must be carried out to-day." He looked at the clock. "Nine; a very convenient hour!" and he then turned his steps in the direction of the castle.

Half an hour later he stood before the count. The young man had just arisen from dinner.

"You have come to ask about the letter?" he inquired. "It has been attended to."

"Of that I had no doubts. I have come to show my gratitude in a practical way." He hastily told what had transpired, in the most glaring colors, of course. "It must have been a frightful scene. The girl swore she would not leave you, and her father that he regarded your proposal as an insult. So he has locked her in her room, and is going to drag her off to some Ghetto to-morrow early--who knows where. The girl will be lost to you forever if you do not act with promptitude."

The count paced the floor in great excitement. "But what can I do?" he asked.

"It would be bad if you required me to tell you!"

"An abduction! But that would be an act of violence."

"Has it never happened before? At any rate, you need not bother yourself. There will be no obstacles. I know the girl's room."

"But if she refuses?"

"Has she refused to come to the park, and is it likely she will refuse to go with you, now her father has been foolish and fanatical enough to tell her he would not even agree to a marriage with you?"

"But she will demand an oath from me!"

"Well, then, swear. You know the proverb about lovers' oaths. As it is, you seem to have developed considerable skill in this critical situation. If you have gone so far without oaths, you can manage the rest."

"It is impossible; my conscience will not allow it." And yet, as he said this, he saw in his mind's eye a carriage stopping before a hunting-lodge belonging to him, five hours distant, and himself stepping out, with Judith in his arms.

"Your conscience," said the magistrate. "Well, of course you can best judge of that yourself. Only consider the matter. You have a few hours still. If you dare venture, let your carriage wait in the street behind the house, about one o'clock, a few hundred feet away from the court-yard gate. I shall be enjoying the fresh air at an open window at that time. If I see you below, I will open the gate to you at the stroke of the clock. Good-night, or *au revoir!*"

He started to go, but a motion of the count detained him. "Only one question. Trachtenberg told his daughter he would reject even a formal proposal from me--is that true?"

"Do I ever lie?" asked Herr von Wroblewski, angrily and yet smiling at the same time. "Do you think I am so stupid as to tell a lie which could be disproven by your asking his daughter one question? You do not know me yet, my dear count!"

"Does his fanaticism carry him so far?"

"You are surely not surprised at that. Those people barely consider us human beings, and if your conscience cannot accommodate itself-- But that is your own business."

He bowed and left.

CHAPTER VI.

Four weeks had passed away. It was a dull, dirty November day. The gray snow-clouds were lowering, and now and then the lazy flakes fell, turning to water in the air and to mud on the ground. Between the slippery ploughed land and the low strata of clouds, the mists lay thick and motionless. The mild west wind that blew at times in the upper regions of the atmosphere did not reach them, and there they lay, as if wedged in, the gray ocean of vapor absorbing every tone and color. Even the sharpest eye could see but a few steps in advance.

The heath was quite deserted. A man who came from the west, driving towards the town in a light wagonette, met no one of whom he could ask the way. The wagonette was empty, and the fiery steeds, when he slackened the reins, galloped along at such a pace that the mud flew up in waves; yet the driver urged them along in the gray twilight.

It was now nearly midday, but no lighter than when he started in the early morning. "Drive on, Fedko; it is a case of life and death," the butler had said when he was told to go, and indeed he

knew it himself. So again he allowed the reins to slacken, when suddenly the carriage stood still. The horses reared, but in vain. The tough bog in which they had sunk to the knees held them fast. The man jumped out, but he, too, stuck fast; they must have driven on the ploughed land at the turn of the road.

There he stood helpless--what was he to do--where was he to turn? "*Jesu, Marie!*" he cried, "perhaps in the meantime she will die!" Suddenly he heard a distant sound. He listened. It was the bell from the tower of the Dominican convent chiming the hour of noon.

He seized the reins and lashed the horses; they plunged madly. Following the sound, he succeeded in getting back to the road, where he could see through the mist the red cross at the entrance of the town. Five minutes more and the magistrate would have the letter.

But it was destined to be much longer than that. He had only reached the first detached houses when he met a crowd of people. "Make way!" he shouted; but he was obliged to drive at walking pace, and when he came into the built-up street his horses were brought to an entire standstill. The thoroughfare was filled with a compact body of people. It was as if the entire population were wedged together. Christians and Jews, men and women, now pushing forward, now backward, but without noise or tumult.

They whispered to one another, and when Tedko made an effort to push his way through they only said, under their breath, "Don't you see it's a funeral?" With this he had to be content; so he drove up close under the monastery wall. He did not ask who was dead--that was no concern of his. And perhaps it was well that he did not ask, and well that he did not wear the livery of his master, Count Agenor Baranowski.

They were the poorest of the people who waited to join the funeral procession--grooms, day laborers, and beggars, a rough lot, who generally eke out a cheerless existence, without any particular pleasure or pain, unless it be the care for their daily bread.

There must have been a close tie between them and the deceased, for if one of them raised his voice or pushed forward at all noisily he was instantly hushed into silence.

There was not one of the Jews who had not a deep rent in his garment. As this mode of grief is seldom observable except in the case of relations, the dead man seemed a connection of all. So, too, it was easy to read in the excited faces, and in the murmurs which now and then ran through the crowd, that their sorrow was strongly mingled with indignation.

Weeping and wailing came from the house of mourning. "It is his sister and her children from Tarnopol," whispered the crowd. "His son has not come yet."

Suddenly a weird sound arose, increased in volume, and ceased. It was the short prayer said by the burial guild before they enter the house to carry out the corpse.

"Make way!" resounded through the ranks, and the people pressed together to leave the middle of the street free. Some climbed on the count's carriage. The coachman made no objections. He sprang from his seat, and busied himself about the horses. Poor, rude serf as he was, he was no more in fault than the horses he drove, the same with which, four weeks before, he had driven his master and Judith to the retired lodge in the Carpathians; but he could not feel comfortable on his raised seat, for he now knew who was about to be borne to his last home.

But before this, another incident was to intensify the excitement. A piercing shriek was heard and a cry, "Raphael has come!"

When this news reached the house of mourning a prayer, just commenced, was suddenly stopped. The good order was for a time disturbed, and inquiries arose as to whether the report was true and where he was, to which no answer could at first be obtained. Finally some one told those in front, who passed the tidings on, that Raphael, hearing he was too late, had swooned away, but that, recovering quickly, he had gone into the house by the rear door, that he might take leave of his father.

"Stand back!" came the order. "The procession will start directly." The crowd obeyed, but their grief and anger became more apparent. The wailing of the women increased, and they cursed Judith and the count with loud voice and clenched fists.

Fedko drew his cap farther over his face. "If they knew what has happened this morning!" he thought. Verily, he did not care to change places with his master.

A minute later the prayers recommenced. The gutturals of the Hebrew ritual, solemn and impressive, penetrated the murky atmosphere. The procession was in order. In front, led by their teachers, came the boys of the congregation, the smallest first, all clad in long black garments. They walked two by two in silence, until, at a given signal, they burst into a prayer. It was short--so short that it was as though the hundred clear, childish voices had given vent to one simultaneous cry of grief. To this versicle, entreating for the peaceful repose of the dead, the crowd responded, "Amen! Amen!"

The youths followed, and then the men, all in their best attire, the caftan of cloth or silk being

torn open on the breast. Some prayed silently, but the greater proportion walked along with bowed heads and lowering faces.

Between times was heard the shrill cry, "Save the soul!" from the watchers of the dead, as they held the alms-bags to the spectators.

The burial guild came next, shrouded in white linen blouses, their heads covered with a white praying-cloth. On a bier, carried by six men, was the corpse, the feet foremost, wrapped in a white cloth, not in a coffin, so that the outlines of the form were distinctly visible.

The women sobbed aloud, the men beat their breasts, imploring, "Peace, peace!"

After the other part of the fraternity, that alone has the right to surround the dead, had passed by, and the mourners became visible, a still stronger emotion stirred the multitude. Raphael, still in his mud-bespattered travelling-clothes, walked alone. He must have rent his garments so violently as to tear the flesh, for fresh blood-stains were on the edges. His face was gray as ashes, and his hair was doubly black by contrast; his features seemed petrified. He walked erect, his eyes fixed on the bier and his dead father's head. He declined the support of his uncle, who was near him, and only the deeply drawn corners of his mouth and the half-closed lips betrayed the agony he was enduring. He was not so much a mourner as an avenger.

"Poor fellow!" a woman would sob occasionally, but the men watched him with bated breath, and when one shouted, "Avenge him! we will help you!" they all joined in as if waiting for the call. The town doctor and overseers, who walked behind Raphael, looked around frightened, for the Christian dignitaries followed them, the burgomaster at their head. Herr von Bariassy was there also, with his subordinates. The magistrate alone was missing.

The procession moved slowly into the sea of fog over the dripping heather to the "Good Place," as the Eastern Jew calls the graveyard. All who could joined the procession. Fedko had a free road now, yet it seemed to him the right thing to drive to the back door, as if his errand were one which could not bear even this dismal daylight.

The staircase to the first floor was locked, and when he knocked one of the two Hussars who were walking, apparently idly, up and down, came and asked his business. After the soldier was satisfied, he knocked twice, and another Hussar opened the door, while a fourth stood at the head of the stairs. Finally the cook appeared. "Our master is ill; ill with terror," she whispered to Fedko. "He is so afraid of Jews! That is the reason these soldiers are here. But he will be certain to see you," and a few minutes after the coachman was requested to step in.

The magistrate sat in an arm-chair, looking very ill. His face grew paler and more agitated as he glanced over the letter. It contained but two lines: "As misfortune has occurred and I am helpless, come quickly, and bring the doctor with you."

He sprang to his feet. "What has happened?" he asked, tremblingly.

"If it isn't in the letter, I--" Fedko began, hesitatingly.

"Speak out! I am to go to Borky, and take the doctor with me; so it surely cannot remain secret from me. The Jewess appears to be ill."

The coachman nodded, "Yes, very ill."

"Has she injured herself?"

The man was silent.

"Speak! how did this calamity take place? The doctor must take his necessary instruments."

"She fell into the lake."

"When?"

"This morning, early. The count was still asleep."

"Who saved her?"

"The butler and myself. It was a hard piece of work. She struggled so. We only got her to land when she became unconscious."

The magistrate walked nervously up and down. "And this in addition! Surely the scandal was great enough. But what am I to do? You can fetch the doctor yourself. But not the town doctor. He is a Jew himself. The only good thing in the affair is that they do not know where she is. I will give you a line to the regimental doctor in Roskowska."

He went to his desk, and began to write. After a few words he dropped his pen. "Fedko, it is a puzzle. The Jew died yesterday at noon, and this happened this morning. Who the devil told it to the girl so quickly?"

"Nonsense, sir!" answered the coachman. "No stranger has been in the castle. She has not heard it yet."

"But what other reason could she have, the silly fool? She is there enjoying a thousand pleasures with her lov--"

He paused in the middle of the word. This Ruthene boor was staring at him in such a curious way. "This is very bad," he thought, "and he may repeat it. It cannot be allowed. This scandal on top of the other, and I am undone. They must leave, both of them."

He got up from his desk. "I will drive with you." He went to the window, and peered into the street, which was quite deserted. "Where is the carriage--at the court-yard gate? Very good. Then we can reach Roskowska unobserved. These stupid Jews threatened me last night."

He sent Fedko into the anteroom, and dressed rapidly. Lady Anna came in, and he told her the purport of his journey. The pair exchanged brief but hearty farewells. She summed up his activity in the affair in one word, while he thanked her with a delicate reference to the prior and the Rittmeister. He then went down-stairs, glancing timorously into the open door of the death-chamber as he passed. The windows were shrouded, and the numerous pictures turned to the wall. A small oil-lamp, the "soul-lamp," was burning in one corner of the darkened room, while the boards creaked as if drawing a breath of relief, because freed from their ghastly burden.

The official shivered as he hastened through the court-yard and jumped into the carriage. One of the Hussars took his place by the side of the coachman, and away they drove through the deserted street and along the riverside to the suburb Roskowska, where were the Hussar barracks and the residence of the regimental physician.

He was at home, ready to start, and willingly promised silence. But when the magistrate told him who needed his services, and requested him to take the necessary remedies with him, the rough old gentleman was deeply moved.

"Trachtenberg's daughter!" he said; and his bristly white moustache quivered. "Yesterday I attended the death-bed of her father, to-day the daughter's; and two months since how happily and peaceably these people lived! Oh, my dear sir, a terrible crime has been committed!"

"A good deal could be said on that subject," equivocated Von Wroblewski, helping the doctor to pack what was required. He dismissed the Hussar, but ordered the coachman to drive around the town, so they would not meet the returning procession. He then gave his version of the story to the doctor. "You see," he concluded, "how the mob wrong me. Nor is the count as guilty as he seems. The fanaticism of the old man is really to blame. 'I would rather see my child a corpse than that she should become Countess Baranowski.' Those were his words, 'pon my honor. Otherwise Agenor would not have proceeded to violence."

"All the better," rejoined the doctor. "He can marry her now. The dead make no objections."

"Hm--" The magistrate cleared his throat, but he had no answer ready. The idea kept running in his mind, "Anyhow, it would be an escape." He begrudged the Jews a triumph; but if Agenor did this, he would escape an unpleasant investigation. Yet it was not to be thought of. Though the young man might be as wax in other matters, in this he was iron. His lineage, his purse, his blood, were ever in his mind. How did he once express himself? "Only if I had to choose between a Jewess and a jail would I stop to consider which would be the greatest insult to my ancestors." But if he did not wish to marry, and if this was the only way to keep Judith alive and quiet the scandal, what then?

The magistrate closed his eyes involuntarily. He was a hard, unscrupulous man, and his entire life had been one long lie, but even he shuddered at the thought that just now occurred to him. It would be too base, and dangerous besides. He offered the doctor a cigar, and began to talk about the bad weather; and, indeed, it was a rough journey over the miry road and through the gray, dripping solitude.

The conversation soon dropped. Too dangerous? The idea recurred again. But it might not be. The interested parties would be silent, and, as it was, Judith and the count must leave the country. It would satisfy the girl. She would be provided for, and the supposititious scoundrel could probably be found, for, in spite of his assumed oaths, it was not likely that he had gone to Russia. If the count was willing, that would be the best way of escape.

By this time he was able to comfortably elaborate the plan in all its details. A queer sensation took possession of him, but in his heart of hearts he was afraid of himself; and yet he experienced a certain delight in thinking what an inventive genius he was. This must have been pictured on his face, for the doctor asked, in astonishment,

"What makes you so cheerful?"

Wroblewski became sober instantly. "I thought--well, what did I think? I believe it will end well, after all. As regards the girl, I trust to your skill. It would be sad if the pretty creature perished so miserably."

"Yes," was the answer, "it would be sad, and also very disagreeable for you."

"For me? But, my dearest doctor, you surely do not think I am afraid of the complaint made by the girl's father to the government. Little can be done to the count, and nothing to me. *Mon Dieu!* we are living in a country where the law is respected. The government will surely act according to law and order, and hand over the document to be examined by--"

"Yourself?"

"Not by myself, but by the magistracy here. That is a great difference. Just see," he continued, pathetically, "what a revengeful people these Jews are. Instead of making his peace with God, the old man used his last span of life in elaborating and carrying out a plan of revenge on those he supposed were his enemies."

"Although they treated him like Christians!" said the doctor, and his white moustache worked again. "But I believe the case to be otherwise. Nathaniel Trachtenberg would have died sooner if he had not felt compelled to fulfil this last mandate of conscience. That is also the conviction of my colleague, the town doctor. We watched with surprise and emotion the power of mind over matter; the feeble body sustained by the iron will. I was the first physician with him the morning of his daughter's flight, as my colleague was absent. He got up, it seemed, after the old servant told him her knocking at Judith's door had been useless, and, going to her room, he broke the oaken planks with the weight of his body as if they had been straw. He read the note he found on her table, and fell to the floor. It was a stroke which affected the brain partially, and the whole of the left side. When, an hour after the seizure, I went to the bedside to open a vein, I said to myself, 'You are tormenting a dying man. He won't survive the evening,' he looked inquiringly at me, and babbled something with his paralyzed tongue. As I could not understand, he wrote, 'How long have I?' I was on the point of lying; but when I looked at him I could not, but answered that it rested in God's hands. He wrote again: 'Have mercy, and give me three weeks;' and the look he gave me I shall never forget. By that time the elders of the congregation had assembled, and he began to write his wishes, which were immediately obeyed. One messenger was sent to his relatives, another to his lawyer, and another to Dr. Romberg, a solicitor in Lemberg. I objected at first; but when I saw how his eye grew brighter and brighter and his writing more and more distinct, I felt, so to say, queer, and allowed it to go on. Then came the most serious difficulty. He longed for his son in Heidelberg, and they calculated it would take five weeks to reach him, if summoned by letter. But in less than ten minutes a young fellow was found who was willing to travel night and day. So, you see, my dear sir, though much can be said against the Jews, they have at least a great regard for the dying and the dead."

"Too great, alas!" ejaculated Herr von Wroblewski. "I don't wish to throw a stone at the dead man, for he was blinded by hate. But how is it these people, usually so prudent, allow themselves to be incited against me? It will be their own destruction. I know for certain that this Jewish scribbler from Lemberg, the most clever quibbler in Galicia, has drawn up quite an accusation against me; and these people, who generally hardly dare to breathe in my presence, crowded up to sign it. Of course, it was lies, nothing but lies, 'pon my honor! You must acknowledge, doctor, a Christian would never have spent his last breath in hatching plans of revenge."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "Possibly it was not merely a desire for revenge that urged him on. My colleague and myself witnessed these exciting daily scenes, of course, at the bedside of the deceased, most unwillingly, and protested against them. But he always replied--" The old gentleman paused.

"Well?" said Wroblewski, "one whose conscience is as clear as mine can listen to anything."

"His answer was: 'It is this duty which keeps me alive. It cries to heaven that such a man should be a judge. I will not go before God's throne until I have done my utmost to purify the earth from him.' Pardon me, Herr von Wroblewski!"

In spite of himself, the magistrate had grown pale. "Please, don't mention it. It does not matter in the least. It is too unjust, too foolish! The count elopes with his daughter, and he wishes to punish me. If it grieved him so terribly, he might have employed his last energies in getting her back again. The Jews are such a clever race that it would have been easy for them to have discovered the count's hiding-place."

"Castle Borky?" said the doctor. "Nathaniel and the elders knew that the evening after the elopement. It was superfluous trouble on your part to bind me to secrecy. There were a number of men who wished to bring Judith back by main force, that she might be judged by the congregation, but Nathaniel forbade it. 'No,' he said, 'some one will lose his life, perhaps, or you will be heavily punished by the courts. It is not worth while to incur danger on account of such an outcast. And why judge her? God will do that. For you and me she is a corpse.' Yet in the secret depths of his heart he must have had some feeling for the unhappy girl, for he fought long against the fearful ceremony customary in such cases, though it is very rarely carried out. It is said this is the first time in two hundred years that a Jewess of this congregation has eloped with a Christian. When he finally agreed, he made one stipulation, which certainly would not have been granted to any one else. But they could not refuse him, their head, her father."

"I don't understand. What ceremony?"

"The funeral!"

"What!" exclaimed the magistrate, in surprise, "have they buried Judith?" He was on the point of laughing, but the expression on his companion's face sobered him.

"It was so ghastly that I shall never forget it. My colleague and I had so arranged it that the last few days one of us was always with him. We relieved each other every six hours. But we knew very well we could not detain the escaping life much longer. He had weakened considerably after the lawyer's visit. There was no fresh stroke, but the tissues were being fast consumed. He lay there as if asleep, stammering his son's name now and then; and, indeed, had he not longed so greatly to see his son he would probably have died sooner. As I entered the room about eleven o'clock, day before yesterday, to relieve my colleague, he whispered to me: 'The end is fast approaching. Stay with him, but do not interfere, no matter what occurs.' Shortly after, the elders entered the room, and with them the rabbi, all clad in their praying-garments. They bowed to him, and asked if they had his consent. He nodded, the door opened and twelve men belonging to the burial guild came in, wearing white shrouds, carrying a curious burden. It was a large, handsome rose-tree in full bloom, the damp earth still clinging to its roots. Goodness knows where they got it. Perhaps from Count Baranowski's conservatory. They took the bush to the bed, and Nathaniel put out his hand and touched its crown. His lips moved. It may have been a blessing, or it may have been a farewell greeting. While this was being done, the others hid their faces with their praying-cloths, and some sobbed aloud. The bush was then taken into the middle of the room, the rabbi stepped forward--I have never seen a more malignant face--and spoke a few words loud and rough: I think it was a curse. He then seized the bush with both hands, broke it, and threw the pieces on the floor before him. One after another the men went up, snatched a blossom and scattered the leaves, until the bush stood bare as well as broken. I went to the foot of the bed. The old man kept his eyes closed, but he knew what was going on. A feeble groan burst from his lips, and tears coursed down his cheeks. He remained in the same position when the 'soul-lamp' was lighted for her who was from henceforth to be considered dead. Nor did he move when they made the cut in his shirt, which is emblematical of the rent made in the life of the mourner. At last the bier was brought in; the broken bush was placed on it, with the leaves which had been carefully gathered up; a white pall was spread over all, and then they departed. The elders followed, and I was again alone with Nathaniel for about two hours. I held his hand in mine, for I could not speak. At the end of that time the rabbi and elders returned, and the former, stepping up to the couch, said: 'It is finished, and because thou wast a just man all the days of thy life, may the Almighty prolong it! We have done according to thy will--thy daughter's grave is between that of thy wife (may she rest in peace!) and that which thou hast chosen for thyself. And when the Lord shall call her to judgment, and she dies in our own faith, that grave shall be open for her. We swear it to thee!' Nathaniel nodded. His breathing became more and more quiet, but he lasted ten hours, until yesterday noon, when he fell asleep--"

The doctor drew a long breath. "Excuse me, but not just now," he exclaimed, abruptly, as he saw the magistrate about to speak; "when I think of that empty grave and of her to whom I am going--" He pulled the carriage window down and leaned out, as if to breathe more freely, until the rain beat upon his hot forehead.

"Another sentimental fool!" thought the magistrate. "Curious, but most people are sentimental." But he dared not speak. So they drove slowly along. The twilight has given place to night, and as they were nearing the mountains, and the ground was ascending, the tired horses dragged the carriage through the mud at walking pace. At last they came to a standstill.

"What is the matter?" the magistrate asked, leaning out of the window.

"I don't know," was the answer. "Two horsemen with torches, followed by a carriage, are coming to meet us. I must stop so they can pass on this narrow road."

They proved to be servants of the count. The butler was in the carriage. He opened the door. "At last, sir! Have you brought the doctor with you? Our master is nearly mad, and has sent me out to look for you."

"Is she worse?" inquired the doctor.

"I don't know," said the butler, anxiously; "it was bad enough from the beginning. She is in the most violent fever. Two maids can hardly hold the poor thing on her couch. If the gentlemen would step into my carriage, we should reach the castle in half an hour, the horses being fresher."

Castle Borky was originally only a shooting-box of the Baranowskis, but the last occupant had been a misanthropic bachelor who had added considerably to the building, converting it into a residence. Situated on the lower slope of the mountains, it commanded a splendid view over the plain. This outlook, in fact, was its only attraction, for the garden, though large, was not ornamental. The pond, on whose shore that desperate struggle had taken place, had been artificially excavated in the plateau behind the house.

Beaching the house, they were met by the count. "Dr. Reiser," he cried, taking his hand, "come quickly!"

He led him up the stairs and through a suite of rooms until they stood in the sick-room. There was Judith, her haggard face deathly white, her forehead so covered with perspiration that her auburn hair clung to her temples in disordered locks. Her eyes were shut, and her limbs shook with fever. Two servants, common wenches, with coarse faces, cowered at the foot of the bed.

"She is asleep," whispered the count.

The doctor shook his head, went softly to her, and looked at the emaciated features of the girl he had known a few weeks before as a blooming beauty. His heart beat hard as he remembered the rose-bush.

She opened her eyes; the mad light of fever shone in them. "Agenor," she whispered. Baranowski bent over her tenderly, answering, "Here I am! What is it?"

"Agenor!" she shrieked, "have pity on me and let me die!"

She attempted to rise, but he pushed her gently back on the pillows. "Mercy!" she repeated, resisting violently. "You must know I cannot live so any longer. I will not curse you. I will bless you, but let me die. There is the pond."

The count was again obliged to hold her till the paroxysms were past.

"It has been like this for fourteen hours," he whispered to the doctor. "Chills and fever alternating; and she never ceases repeating those same words. It is heart-breaking."

"Yes, it is heart-breaking," was the reply, quietly given, but the words were as cold and sharp as the stab of a dagger.

Again the doctor bent over the couch. With the exception of some bruises on her hands and a cut on the right cheek, caused probably by the sharp leaf of a water-flag, there were no injuries perceptible. He took the measure of her temperature and felt her pulse. At his touch she opened her eyes and stared at him.

"Dr. Reiser!" she suddenly exclaimed. "You are good. Let me go to the pond. You are a friend of my father, and I must preserve my father from this disgrace."

The doctor covered her up carefully and went into the dressing-room. Agenor followed.

"What do you think of her?" he inquired, anxiously.

"As a medical man, I have little to say," said the old gentleman, roughly. "The external injuries are not worth mentioning. There seem no indications of any inflammatory condition of the lungs or brain. The fever is violent, but not excessive, and is quite explained by the occurrence this morning. If her mind were at rest, or she had fallen into the water accidentally, she would be able to leave her bed in a day or two."

"But as it is at present?" said the count, nervously.

"It will have a bad ending. I could not swear to it, but it is my conviction. I will put her to sleep with an opiate, and will try to check the fever. I hope by to-morrow her mind will be clear. But what good will that do, since her wish for death has not been created by the fever? She will beg neither you nor me for death to-morrow, but she will find it for herself."

Agenor wrung his hands, saying:

"I will do anything to quiet her. She looks at everything in too black a light--perhaps I may prove it to her. I shall never desert her, never leave her to her fate, never! I shall watch her carefully, and have her watched."

The doctor shook his head.

"Nonsense!" he said, harshly; "if and how you can convince her is your own affair; but don't attempt supervision. I have my own experiences of that sort of thing. And if it succeeded, it would only be verifying the manner of her death. For if she did not die in the pond, she would in her bed. There is no such thing, my dear sir, as a broken heart; it is only to be found in novels. But there is such a thing as consumptive fever. I saw Judith six weeks ago, and now again, and I can assure you she is in a fair way for it. As affects my conscience, the difference in the manner of death would not be considerable, but I must leave to you which you prefer to adopt."

He opened his medicine-chest, and began to prepare a drink.

The count sighed profoundly.

"Dear Dr. Reiser, you judge me severely. A man like you ought to know life. These affairs rarely end tragically. I assure you I look at my duties to Judith very seriously. But a marriage would be a moral suicide. That you must acknowledge."

The doctor turned around sharply and looked into the count's face. It was very gloomy.

"I admit it. But can one commit a physical murder to save one's self from moral suicide?"

"What am I to do?" groaned the young man.

Dr. Reiser shrugged his shoulders. "Choose that which seems easiest. Consider the case--you look ill--go and have a sleep. I will be guarantee for tonight. Good-night."

He passed into the sick-room. Agenor gazed after him, sighing deeply, and then went into his bedroom, where he threw himself on a sofa, in the dark. There he remained for an hour, racking his brain--murder or suicide--was there, indeed, no third alternative?

A knock on the door aroused him thoroughly. It was the butler.

"Herr von Wroblewski wishes to know if you will speak to him to-day. If not, he will go to bed."

In his trouble he had forgotten this man--a scoundrel who had always given him evil counsel, yet who was in the matter his only confidant, and for this reason he had turned to him this morning in his helplessness. "I will come," he hastily answered.

He found his guest in the dining-room on the ground-floor. The latter had enjoyed the meal which had been served, and was now comfortably stretched out, with wine and cigars. "Excuse me," the count began.

"Pray, pray don't mention it. You have heavy cares just now. I only sent for you because I am really somewhat tired. Just sit down and let me know how I can help you. You must surely see that I am your friend. 'Pon my honor, it was not easy to leave my office and family to come here. But have courage, and tell me."

"Thanks. What happened here this morning--"

"I already know," said Wroblewski, "though I do not quite comprehend it. I do not wish to blame you, but you do not seem to have acted quite prudently. When you suggested, the evening before the elopement, that Judith might take it tragically, and therefore your conscience would not allow it, what did I say? 'Your conscience? That is your affair. Consider it well.' Now, thought I, 'the count knows Judith better than I, and his position to her; either he will not consider his scruples justified and will come, or they will, after consideration, seem well founded; and then, out of pure friendship, I will catch cold at the open window.' You came, consequently your conscience was clear, and that sufficed for me."

"Dare you speak so to me?" cried the count.

The magistrate evidently thought it more politic to misconstrue this insulting ejaculation. He said, innocently, "Of course! Who else than I, your only faithful friend? But it is not intended as a complaint; as I have once before said, you made a mistake. You ought to have disillusionized the girl carefully and delicately. Everything has its way, and much depends on that. You ought never to have permitted such a brutal affair as that fight in the water to have occurred. You have found maids to-day. Why didn't you yesterday?"

"We will not speak of that," said the count. "Nor will we argue as to whether you aroused my conscience or not, or whether you always did as I wished. Your conduct does not lessen my guilt; at least, not in my sight. I have acted basely and cruelly and carelessly. The first few weeks we passed in a delirium. I thought of nothing in the world but her, and she only of me. Then came the waking. She asked and urged, never dreaming I would refuse to marry her. She only wondered why the priest was so long in coming to baptize her and to marry us. You can believe I expiated a large portion of my sin in the three days I tried to kiss away her fears while I dissembled and lied. It was in vain. Yesterday she remained in her room a long time; and when she at last appeared, I read in her face that she no longer believed me. Then, while she listened quietly, I confessed all, and swore I would never forsake her, and I really thought she would get over it in a few days. So, at her request, I left her quite alone. That evening, when I saw her again, I was startled--such tearless, inexpressible sorrow was in every line of her face. She begged and implored: 'Make me your wife, for only three days, and then I will commit suicide, and you shall be free again.' It was frightful."

He was silent.

"Cheer up!" said Wroblewski, encouragingly. "Of course, you tried to pacify her."

The count shook his head. "I said to her: 'I can die with you, but I cannot make you my wife. If you like, this shall be our last hour. But if you decline this, and commit suicide, I will follow you.' I meant it seriously."

"I do not doubt it. And then you let her alone."

"I watched by her bedside till break of day. She was so still, I thought she had gone to sleep, and I gave way to my fatigue. It was the shouting of the servants in the court-yard that woke me. Fedko had observed her, and, following, staved off this calamity."

"Pray God forever!" ejaculated the magistrate, solemnly. "What does the doctor think?"

The count repeated the doctor's opinion. "It is frightful!" he groaned, clasping his hands.

"Hm! then she does not know her father is dead?"

"Dead!" repeated Agenor, starting up.

The magistrate told the particulars indifferently. "But we need not take that into account just now, for she must not hear of it. You must take her away to Paris or Italy, though I do not suppose it will avail much. Consumptive fever! suicide! why, it gives one cold shivers down the back. That is, if we credit the doctor. But need we? For, I can tell you, he is a sentimentalist--a philanthropist"--here his face wore a contemptuous sneer--"and perhaps a friend of the Jews."

"I believe him; and if you had seen the poor thing you would not have doubted, either."

"That's bad. But now we must be sensible. What you said yesterday, excuse me, was sheer nonsense. That is the way a counter-jumper would talk if he could not marry a seamstress. But a Baranowski has obligations. What good would it do you, or the girl, or the world in general, if you committed suicide together? There are two courses open to you. Either let things remain as they are--"

"No, no!" cried the count.

"You need not shout! I am not a barbarian myself. I only meant for you to go South with a physician who would watch her carefully. But, of course, if you believe in a catastrophe notwithstanding, we will not speak of it again."

"No, not of that."

"Well, there is nothing else for us to talk about, for you can find the way to the nearest priest without my help."

The count stood still, with averted face. "You know of no other way?"

"No. I am sorry it must be so, but here are my heartiest congratu--"

He stopped, frightened at the gloom and pallor which overspread the count's face.

"Of course," he murmured, "how could there be an alternative? Pardon me, I only asked because, when one is in a fix like this--I will do it. Please arrange with the nearest priest. It can take place to-morrow."

Here Von Wroblewski looked at him sharply. A shudder passed through him.

"After the wedding you will kill yourself?"

The count was silent.

"He will do it," thought the magistrate, "certainly, or very probably. That cannot be allowed. Since the Jews have become insubordinate, he is my only reliance, and, besides, it is my duty to save him."

"Hm! my dear count, I am no friend of the Jews, but I do not consider the disgrace such that you cannot survive it."

Agenor shook his head. "It is hard to reason with sentiment. My family pride, my name and race--that was the backbone of my life. It was taught me by my father, and I have clung to it with body and soul. I cannot live a cripple with a broken back. That is all!"

"That is all," repeated Wroblewski, mechanically. He had delayed the suggestion of his plan, but it had to come at last. "Ahem! Listen, my dear friend; you can always have recourse to that. But if I--you mentioned just now that the doctor had produced an artificial sleep for to-night--if you could induce such a sleep for her soul, to last one, two, or three years, or as long as you liked? It would depend on yourself when she was to be wakened."

"What do you mean?"

"As I have said, it would depend on yourself. Of course you would not do it until you felt convinced she would take it more quietly than she has to-day. That will be sure to come with time. The first outburst over, she will remember her duties; there may be children to be cared for. Of course you would have to leave the country immediately."

"What the devil do you mean?"

"It has only just passed through my brain. I have only mentioned it out of friendship, but you can make your own decision. The poor devil will do it for you gladly, for he was saved by your aid, and will hold his tongue in his own interests."

"Who?"

"You remember the affair with your farmer, Afanasiewicz? Well, that Ignatius Tondka--"

The count winced. He trembled in every limb.

"Silence!" he shouted.

"Pardon me. It was only a suggestion. But it is late." He looked at the clock. "Really, it is past midnight."

"It would be criminal."

"Yes, but murder and suicide are also not agreeable matters. Think of it until to-morrow. Good-night, my dear count," and without looking around he left the room, and was shown to his bedchamber. "To the devil with all this sentimentality!" he thought; and yet, though he was far from being sentimental, it was a good long time before he got to sleep.

The sun was high in the heavens when he awoke. The clock indicated ten. He dressed quickly, and rang for the servant, who told him the count had inquired for him repeatedly. The doctor had left, and the invalid was still asleep.

A few minutes after, and the magistrate stood before his host. Agenor looked ill and suddenly old. "I wish to expedite this affair as much as possible. When can the man be here?"

"Have you considered it thoroughly?"

"No hypocrisy! It fits your plans; you will be safe for life. You knew perfectly well that a drowning man would clutch at the blade of a sword. Your carriage is waiting. How much do you want, and when can the man be here?"

Herr von Wroblewski could be laconic when occasion required. "Ten thousand gulden! To-morrow!"

The count wrote a check, and handed it to the magistrate. He read it carefully, nodded, put it into his pocket, and left the room without bow or farewell word.

CHAPTER VII.

Raphael returned from his sad walk as he had started, pale, rigid, and upright. There was not only pity, but even admiration for him in the minds of all, for he gave no heed to his own sorrow and fatigue; he thought only of the wants of others. He called together all the poor to whom his father had been a benefactor, and told them only the giver was changed, not the gift. And to none of those humble and afflicted ones was he more friendly and pitiful than to the old woman who had entered his presence with a fainting heart, Miriam Gold, whose daughter had become a Christian. "Do not tremble, Miriam!" he said. "Such disgrace may be incurred innocently."

This was his own consolation in the first hours of terrible suffering which he had to undergo after his filial duties were ended. He would crouch down in a corner of the death-chamber and keep vigil for the dead, staring into the dim light of the "soul-lamp," and think of the way in which his presentiments had been realized, and the warnings he had vainly given.

"Were we ourselves free from blame?" Nothing hurt him more than this doubt. But he discharged the thought when he remembered the depth of the disgrace his sister had brought upon herself and him. The commonest wench of the Ghetto, he thought, grinding his teeth, would die rather than surrender her honor, and yet the daughter of the best man in the place could defile herself. She deserved his contempt, and he awaited the reading of the will with fear, lest the dying man should have exhorted him to clemency.

His anxiety proved groundless. In the document, written to express Nathaniel's last wishes, Judith was mentioned only in the assignment to her of her portion. He left his blessing to Raphael, with the option of taking up the business or of continuing his studies, but particularly urging him not to allow the action which Rosenberg, the lawyer, had undertaken to fall through. Neither Judith nor the count was involved in it, only Wroblewski. "Such a man should not be a law-giver."

Raphael's mind was soon made up. He assured his guardian he would remain in Galicia, continue the business, and pattern his life after his father's. When the first week of mourning was past, he undertook the management of the factory. What he lacked in years he made up in zeal and diligence.

The government appointed the burgomaster as guardian to Judith. This gave little inconvenience to the good man after he had sent her a copy of the will, to the count's address, and he had put out the money advantageously.

Time passed, but no answer came from her. This surprised no one. They knew she was somewhere on the Continent with the count--where, no one knew exactly, not even Raphael. He was the only man in the town who never mentioned her name.

Week after week slipped by. Winter came and buried moor and town in snow, and people spoke less and less of the beautiful sinner who had broken her father's heart, and was now living with her lover under Southern skies, amid a thousand delights.

Another topic of conversation cropped up. It was the downfall of the magistrate. It was first rumored that he was less firmly seated in his position than formerly, then that Rosenberg had secured an investigation; and then came a day in February when all, young and old, were on the street to catch a glimpse of the commission--a district judge and his secretary. Every one found it most natural. "It was bound to come!" they declared, and all rejoiced.

But they were mistaken. The result was what could hardly be expected. The first weak step leading to this result was the suppression of any display of ill-feeling against Wroblewski by members of the congregation, at Raphael's request, and by command of the elders. It is true, proofs which the deceased as well as Raphael had collected effected a good deal. But although the Lemberg government did at last become attentive and read these accusations more carefully than previous ones, yet Lady Anna's uncle was a prominent member, and he assured his coadjutors that they were all lies, and any contradiction on the part of the other gentlemen would have been rude. And these high officials were exceedingly polite to each other in Austria before March, 1848!

At times even Rosenberg was inclined to give it up, and to Raphael's despairing cry, "How can a government exist where such things are possible?" would answer: "It exists only in proportion to these circumstances." But suddenly the uncle became ill, and had to take a holiday. This would not have availed much had not the doctors said he would never be able to return to his official duties. Then it was decided that such a disgrace was no longer to be borne, and an investigation was ordered. The result was known beforehand--deposition and punishment. An official who deserved deposing merely was never tried in Austria. The machinery of the courts would otherwise have become clogged, and there would have been too many vacant offices.

Herr von Wroblewski knew all that. For the first three months he was kept in continual suspense between fear and hope--fear of the dead, and of the pale, gloomy youth who glanced so contemptuously at him whenever they passed each other that he clenched his fists without daring to raise them--and hope in the politeness of the Lemberg officials. There came a time when he was again able to enjoy the monthly checks brought him by the count's bailiff. The larger proportion he kept, the balance he sent to Russia, to the address of "Herr Antonius Brodski, in Mohilev." Inside the cover was written: "Here, Herr Tondka, is the money the count has sent for you. I hope you are satisfied; but if you are not, it will do you no good. We are not afraid of you." All the notes were in the same strain, some more, some less rude, according to the amount enclosed. As to the other matter, he could rejoice. "The stupid Jews laughed before their time." But when news of the impending investigation reached him, he gave up hope. It was fully determined upon, and there was no use in fighting. He had known for twenty years the way in which these investigations ended. His office was lost, and he must make an effort to escape punishment.

With the air of a man of injured honor, he stepped up to the judge and handed in his resignation. "The investigation will establish my innocence, but I will not remain after these insulting suspicions. I owe this to my dignity, the dignity of my position and of my colleagues, who have acted with the same zeal. I can affirm this with confidence, for I know their manner of conducting business," and he named a number of officials, each of whom had a worse reputation than the other.

The judge listened. A tremendous scandal was threatened. He commenced the inquiry, but reported this at Lemberg. The government reflected, the scamp was out of harm's way, and it mattered little to the state whether he got a pension or some years' imprisonment; besides, the cost would be the same, for he would be certain to drag a number of companions down with him, and his patron was still alive. So the investigation was stopped after two months, and Herr von Wroblewski was pensioned off.

The result was unsatisfactory to all parties, but chiefly to Raphael. Though displaced from office, the magistrate had escaped his well-earned punishment, "because he sinned mostly against Jews," thought Raphael, and the reflection made him more bitter than ever.

On the other hand, after Wroblewski was over his first annoyance, he was well satisfied with his lot. The dignitaries of the town and the nobles in the neighborhood were cold towards him, it is true; but a little philosophy made that endurable, especially when there were always some amiable people to be met who would appreciate his and his wife's social talents. He was free from the tiresome duties of office, and could stand the reduction in pay, since a brief note to the count was always effectual in producing any sum, he chose to ask for.

Agenor never wrote. In all this time Wroblewski had not received a line from him, and consequently knew as little as others where the lovers were staying. The bailiff, Herr Michael Stiegle, a silent, grumpy Swabian, forwarded the letters punctually, and brought the replies in a form which delighted the heart of the ex-magistrate more than the tenderest epistle could have done.

True, Herr Stiegle made sour faces; and when Herr von Wroblewski, after he had been turned out by Raphael, desired a wing of the castle to be prepared for him, the bailiff threatened even to be rude. But a letter from the count caused him to carry out this wish too. In short, Wroblewski lived as pleasantly as formerly, and much more free from care.

The letters from Russia did not disturb his equanimity, and the more threatening they became the more amusement they afforded. "What fools try to be scamps nowadays!" he said, contemptuously. "Such a stupid fellow, and yet he wishes to be a scamp!"

What did Ignatius Tondka want? Of the three hundred gulden the count promised him monthly, he received one hundred, a sum upon which he could live very comfortably in Mohilev. It was impertinent for him to demand the entire amount and to recall Agenor's promise. "The count refuses to give more," Wroblewski had written repeatedly. "He knows you. You would not dare to betray him, or to return to Austria, for your own sake."

The impudent fellow, however, was not content with this, but kept on writing. "I will ruin you both, though I perish myself." It was too comical!

So the days sped by, pleasant days of leisure for the former official; and as neither the Rittmeister nor the prior belonged to those narrow-minded men who had given them the cut because of the court of inquiry and its results, Lady Anna was also content.

The couple did not envy their successors, who had hired their apartment at Trachtenberg's, the magistrate Graze and his wife, vulgar people and poor creatures. The new judge actually lived, with wife and children, on his salary. A Puritan--he even paid his rent.

Certainly, living in the castle was not only pleasanter, but cheaper. There was the splendid park before their windows, in which no Jew could be seen again. For the first act of Wroblewski, after his transmigration, had been the resurrection of the "notice board." Stiegle, the boor, had striven against it, and had even asked the count about it, but had been forced to give in. The flowers seemed to smell sweeter in spring, and the arbors afforded a cooler shade in summer to Herr von Wroblewski, since the board was in its old place.

The summer passed, and the anniversary of the count's introduction to his inherited estates came, and was celebrated by a mass in the parish church. Herr Stiegle distributed alms by request of the count, but the donor's whereabouts none knew. A nobleman in the neighborhood reported that he had seen the young couple in Verona, in the garden which contains the grave of Juliet; that they looked very happy, and that the servant addressed her as Madame la Comtesse. But the man had the reputation of being a liar; so that even if he spoke the truth accidentally this time, it was valueless without further confirmation, for no one believed that Agenor could marry the Jewess.

Towards the end of November another anniversary occurred, the particulars of which were firmly cemented in the memories of the people. The old synagogue could scarcely contain the worshippers who had assembled to attend the first celebration of Nathaniel's death. The services over, young and old went to the cemetery and listened with deep emotion to the prayer which Raphael delivered at the grave. "Amen! Amen!" was echoed from all sides. Afterwards the throng viewed the beautiful memorial stone erected there, and repeated the words carved upon it, better than any eulogy--"The remembrance of the righteous never faileth."

Between this grave and that of Nathaniel's wife was an empty place. Weeds covered the narrow space, and thorn-bushes spread out their ugly branches. Very few besides the elders and members of the burial guild knew that this ground, too, had been dug up a year before, and something buried there. Others suspected it, but no one asked, and of the hundreds present not one mentioned Judith's name as long as they were in the "Good Place."

"The name of the righteous never dies; but whoso dies in sin, that name shall never be mentioned." Only when they had passed that gate which separates the world of peace from that of battle did they curse the outcast.

But one was silent. He paced by the side of the elders, his form erect, his face set. Since his return, no one had seen a smile on his lips or a tear in his eye. It was only when the procession passed the Baranowski castle that his mouth quivered; and by the glance which he gave towards the white building, which stood in the midst of the leafless park, one could see his implacable hatred.

Perhaps it would have comforted him in his anguish had he known what was transpiring in one of those rooms where the manager was sitting. There Herr Michael Stiegle had sat at his writing-table since morning, and had reckoned, shaken his head, reckoned again, and then growled. He stared at the ceiling a long time, and at last plucked up courage and wrote a short, plain letter to the count, saying that when he became bailiff his intention had been to get rid of the debts with

which the late lord had burdened the estate; that after the interest on the debts had been paid, twelve thousand gulden had been netted, but he had expended at least ten times that amount, while the new loans had been negotiated under very hard conditions. Would the count not lessen his expenses, and, if possible, look after his affairs a little more? Otherwise he, Stiegle, would be obliged to relinquish his position. He understood agriculture, but not the mode of dealing with usurers. The letter bore the address of "The Bank of M. L. Biedermann, Vienna, for Count Agenor Baranowski," for neither did he know of the count's whereabouts. This oppressed Herr Stiegle's mind, like some other mysterious circumstances.

Possibly it was owing to that state of mind that the announcement of a servant that a Capuchin monk was outside, who refused to leave, made him more brusque than usual, so that he fairly shouted at the bent old man, with long white beard, who entered the room with hesitating step. The monk's inquiry also annoyed him, for it was for the address of Count Baranowski.

"It is none of your business," he growled.

The monk stepped near. "It is very important," he urged, with shaking voice; "by God and all the saints, it is very important!"

"Write a letter, then, and I will forward it."

The monk shook his head. "Perhaps the good director would aid him. It was concerning his cousin in Russia, a poor fellow, Ignatius Tondka by name, whom the count had allowed three hundred gulden a month, in consideration of important services; but Herr von Wroblewski only paid him one third of the amount, and that very irregularly. Could the Herr Director not pay it now?"

As he said this he glanced at the papers on the desk, and noted the address of the letter which was there.

"No!" said Herr Stiegle, "I know nothing of the affair. You must go to Wroblewski. Adieu!"

The monk stood doubtfully for a moment, and then quitted the room, with a pious salutation. In the corridor he drew out his breviary, and hastily wrote the address. He then went to Wroblewski. There he seemed to have suddenly shaken off the infirmities of old age. His figure was straight, and his voice firm. "You need not start, Wroblewski; I have only come to arrange matters by word of mouth, it seems so difficult to do it by correspondence."

Herr von Wroblewski grew pale, but quickly regained his composure. "Why should I start?" he asked, with a smile. "You are only risking your own neck. I am not in your debt. All the count has sent I have forwarded. Nothing has been as yet received for November."

"Every word is a lie. My money, or I will write to the count."

"Why don't you? I have not the address or I would give it you. Herr Stiegle forwards the letters. But consider which the count is most likely to believe, you or me. Will you send him my letters? And if you do, is there any sum specified in them?"

The monk was still. Then he burst out into violent invectives, declaring he would confess all; that it would be more pleasant to have enough in prison than to starve in Mohilev, and the good company he would have would compensate for his loss of liberty.

Wroblewski heard him with a smile. "Good!" he answered. "Of course, if you must, you must. But hearken to my last word. Here," drawing out his purse, "are two hundred gulden. I place them in this envelope. On the envelope I write--do you see, my dear Tondka--'Herr Anton Brodski, in Mohilev.' My servant will now take the letter to the post and you will accompany him. Here are twenty gulden besides for your journey home. I shall ring the bell for the servant, and he will either go with you to the post, or he will kick you out of the house!"

When Wroblewski saw the monk walking peacefully by the side of the servant, a few seconds after, he laughed aloud. "He hurries towards Mohilev on the wings of desire!" Perhaps, however, he would have been less merry had he known the workings of the rogue's brain.

CHAPTER VIII.

The blush of dawn glowed on the white, glistening dome of Monte Baldo, while the cold north wind came whistling from the valley of the Sarco, clearing the lake of mists and the sky of clouds. Only here and there the dismal gray veils fluttered like signals of mourning on the mountain-tops, or hid themselves in retired clefts above the azure water. But the sun reached them even there,

as it mounted above the mighty Altissimo di Nago, which lies clumsily between the smiling plains of the Etsch and the Garda.

The light grew stronger, the mists disappeared, and the golden rays fell, full and beautiful, over the deep blue of the sky and the lake, over the pale green of the meadows and the violet-hued rocks with snowy caps, and over the narrow, crooked streets of Riva, which they call Regina del Garda, the old and ugly queen of a kingdom eternally young and beautiful.

The count stood on the balcony of the ancient but well-preserved *palazzino*, whose graceful masonry rises close to the Porto San Michele, in the midst of the thick greenery of a well-kept garden, gazing over the crowded houses at the blue lake and the lovely landscape dotted with white châteaux.

It was the first sunny day after endless days of rain. How he had longed for the sun, thinking when it came that it would ease his heart and clear his brain! But no sun could dispel these shadows. He was a fool when, two months before, he had said to himself, on entering that house, "It is beautiful here; so still, so peaceful, every trouble must vanish away." For his tortured mind there was no earthly refuge. It had been a delusion, also, when, a few days before, the nurse had placed in his arms his new-born boy, and he had murmured, "Thanks, Merciful One, for the angel who is to save me and lead me upwards!" He was a lovely child, with the mother's auburn hair and the father's dark eyes, who, the nurse assured the Signor Conte, smiled when he saw him. But it seemed to Agenor that the dark eyes threatened him, and the tiny hand pushed him down into deeper damnation.

Things had turned out differently from what he had imagined as he sat by the bedside of the poor girl before he agreed to that frightful comedy. Then he had only thought of his disgrace when his deceit should be discovered. How his life was to take form after he had given her soul this opiate, or what the awaking would be--of that he had not thought. There would be time enough to consider all that. Perhaps the step might lead into a garden surrounded with prison walls; but that would be an Eden compared with the dark torture-cell in which he had felt himself after his conversation with the physician, and before that clever scoundrel had given his advice. There was always the disgrace of a discovery! But it was not likely; and, even so, it was less of a disgrace to the name of Baranowski than a marriage with a Jewess. He was forced into it to save his beloved's life! Had he chosen death, she would have followed him, and would that have been an easier solution of the difficulty?

He had felt like a free man when Wroblewski left the castle, nor had he repented during the last few days. On the contrary, when he saw that his stammering promise, "Your wish shall be accomplished; the priest is coming!" was enough to revive the invalid; as he heard the repressed sobbing with which her overwrought mind was gaining its usual tone, and gazed into her face, which was beginning to smile again, he said to himself--it was good--that he had forced himself into it, and the subterfuge appeared a braver deed than the taking of his life. Neither of them referred to the past. Only once she said, "We will pardon our mutual sins against each other. You, that I would leave you; I, that you delayed so long to do me justice. But now we have to anticipate love, fidelity, and happiness as long as God gives us life. Ah! life is beautiful!" He bent over her hand, and covered it with kisses. He had discovered the least evil among so many that threatened, and he would spend his whole strength in making it of less consequence when once the hideous ceremony was over. The nearer the hour came the more afraid of it he became. He was like a schoolboy in the face of inevitable danger. He shut his eyes, that he might not see it. "Why should I see the man?" he said, when Wroblewski arrived one afternoon with the rogue, and wished to introduce him, that they might "talk over to-morrow's programme." The delay was painful. He supposed the creature had brought his costume, and Jan could light up the chapel immediately. Jan knew who was coming, and that he was to be the witness.

The magistrate smiled. "The usual impetuosity of a lover! But the reverend gentleman must first baptize the child, and before the baptism he ought to instruct the mother for at least one hour in the doctrines of our holy church."

The count drew back in horror. He was neither bigot nor atheist. He had simply never thought of religion at all. He believed in God, and kept the Catholic feast-days because he had been taught to do so, and it was the proper-thing for a Baranowski. Heretofore he had only thought of the affair as a crime against the state, not against Judith; much less had he thought of it as blasphemous. It was only now he saw it in this light.

Well, it must be borne; the sacrament of marriage must be dishonored, but how about that of baptism? It was equally holy; yea, holier. He knew his catechism.

"What baptism?" he exclaimed, finally, struggling to appear impassive. "Let her remain a Jewess."

Wroblewski laughed out loud. "So she will, my dear count. But if we don't carry out this hocus-pocus first, she will not credit what comes after. She is a clever little girl, and knows very well that she must be baptized or the marriage is not valid. No sentimentality! And, since all is in working order, we had best hurry up affairs."

The count acquiesced, gave Jan his orders, and went up to Judith. This expected ceremony had

been present to her mind from hour to hour, and had really cured her. Still she trembled, and burst into a fit of wild weeping. He took her hand, and tried to comfort her. But she sobbed on. "I know I can only become your wife as a Christian. And I will be grateful to you for making me one my whole life long. It will be a heaven on earth into which your kind hand leads me. But what goes before is a hell. Don't be angry. It is not because I hate your creed, or because it is strange to me. Even my father, who is an orthodox Jew, always said, 'We are all children of the same Father in heaven.' But this step cuts me off forever from him and from Raphael. Henceforth I have only you in the whole world. I do not weep out of pity for myself, but for them. They have lost daughter and sister; for, as a Christian, I am dead to them. What they will suffer from their own hearts and from our people! I must think of Miriam Gold, whose daughter became a Christian."

He stood beside her as she stammered these words, and he felt he had never before seen such emotion. He was dumb, unable to say a word; for what could he say? That he would spare her this pain? Then his whole game would be lost. The scene had so shaken him that he could hardly stand upright as he led her to the chapel.

The late candidate for holy orders made it very short, and both ceremonies were concluded in very few minutes. To the count it was as though he saw everything through a veil and heard everything muffled by distance.

How many times since had he seen this picture: the dim, faintly lit chapel; the pale woman by his side; the gallows-face of the scoundrel in his cape; Wroblewski stuffing his handkerchief into his mouth to keep from laughing; and poor, faithful old Jan weeping bitterly because a Baranowski was marrying a Jewess!

As he stood this day on the balcony, surrounded on all sides with sunshine and the vivid coloring of the Southern landscape, suddenly it vanished, and in its place was the chapel at Borky, and instead of the twittering of birds in the garden was a whining voice which said, "And hereby I declare you man and wife, in the name of--"

"Ah!" he groaned. "It was frightful. It was the worst thing that could have happened."

It was not because of his blasphemy that he said this after more than a year had passed away. He realized now that his sin against God, not to speak of that against the civil law, had not been his most grievous offence. He made this discovery the morning after the sad farce. Wroblewski, on taking leave, had said, "Hurry up, and get away as soon as you can. Go to Italy, or even farther. Think of the danger if that revengeful fellow, Raphael, should sue you for abduction, and one fine day you were summoned before the courts. Her most gracious Lady Countess would be brought up as witness."

Agenor immediately informed Judith they would leave Borky the following day. She was ready, she answered, but their route must be through her native town.

"Why?"

"So I can beg my father's pardon."

He started. The news of her father's death would certainly affect her keenly, and if she was once in the town the news of the marriage would be sure to leak out. So he entreated her to spare herself that excitement.

"You know it will be useless; that he will never forgive the Christian."

"I must try," she answered. "I owe it both to myself and to him. My father shall not think of your wife as a dishonored and light-minded creature. If he chases the Countess Baranowski from his doors, then at least my conscience will be clear."

In vain he tried to dissuade her, without giving some plausible reason. Finally he conceived an idea which might avail. "The Countess Baranowski must not run a risk of being chased from any door," he declared. "You owe that to me." The effect of this speech was such that he repeated it, urging her to have regard for the honor of his name.

She wept bitterly. "This is worth more to you than the peace of my soul." Yet she submitted, only begging permission to send a letter to her father. A few hours after she brought the letter, praying him, on his word of honor, to send it.

"My word of honor!" he repeated, with pale lips. A few seconds after she had left the room he watched the letter shrivelling up in the fire, and he asked himself, "In what do I differ from those creatures I despise?"

But, away, away! was his one desire, until he was in the carriage. Learning caution by the words of Wroblewski, he chose a way that took him out of the province quickly, going through Southern Hungary to Fiume, and thence by steamer to Ancona. What comforts money could secure they had. A courier travelled in advance, caring for everything. But, nevertheless, it was a dreary journey, over snowy roads and through barren, thinly populated mountainous districts, and no amount of money could make the miserable inns comfortable.

The travelling was slow, not only because of the almost impassable roads, but also because of Judith's state of health. She was so weak and pale, and her thin face looked so tired and sad. "If we were only at Klausenberg!" she kept sighing. He had told her this was the place where they could first expect letters from home. When they were there, how could he comfort her for not having a letter from her father?

Wroblewski wrote that Raphael had begun an action for abduction, and had bribed the judges to extraordinary energy. He hoped to pacify them, but it would demand great sacrifices. The count sent him the sum he demanded, but asked himself, nervously, "Will it do any good?"

At the commencement of the journey he had assumed the name of Count Nogile; quite a proper name, as it was one of the minor titles of the Baranowskis. He gave orders to his attendants, however, never to betray his new name to Judith or his old one to strangers. Accidentally, Judith discovered it during their stay in Klausenberg, and inquired the reason. To her surprise, he had no answer ready, and he was not accustomed to lying. Her anxiety was very apparent, and at length he said: "You shall know all. We hoped in vain for a letter from your relatives; but they are angry, and are prosecuting me for having made you my wife while you are still under age. The punishment will not be heavy, but you cannot wonder if I wish to avoid it for the sake of all."

Again she believed him; her tears proved it, and her despairing cry, "Then we must be homeless forever."

He reassured her by saying that such would be the case only until her people's anger was pacified, which he hoped would be soon.

"Perhaps God will be merciful!" she answered. "How dreadful would be my lot, and how could I endure life, if I knew you had sacrificed home, peace, and happiness for me!"

This plaint cut him to the heart even more than her suspicions. She was speaking the truth, and it was all his own fault. Again, there was the necessity of lying, daily and hourly, and the incessant dread of discovery. Once during their journey they were overtaken by a snow-storm, and forced to seek shelter in a castle by the wayside, where they were kindly welcomed by the proprietress, an old Hungarian aristocrat.

"What is your name?" she asked Judith, in the course of conversation after supper. Judith blushed deeply.

"Nogile," she stammered.

"I know that," said the old lady; "I meant your Christian name." Judith became confused, and she looked at Agenor for help.

"But, Judith," he exclaimed, with a forced laugh; "surely you know your own name."

When they were alone she burst into tears. "Alas!" she sobbed, "I am not sure of my name. You always call me Judith, but the priest baptized me Marie, and so I fancied I must give this name to strangers, and yet I was in doubt."

This confession affected him more than her tears, and pity filled his heart--pity for her and pity for himself.

At that time he had been able to master his emotions; and as he had thought the shadows must flee when the farce was over, so he had expected, when they quitted gloomy Boriky, great things from Italy. He had spent some months there when a gay young officer. The country was, in his memory, a paradise of light and joy; surely there must be an end of sorrow when once they were there.

This time hope did not entirely deceive him. They went to Florence first, and rented one of the splendid villas before the Porta del Prato; and the mild air of the South invigorated Judith to such an extent that her cheeks grew more rosy, her eyes brighter, and hours came when she laughed and jested as befitted one of her years. This reacted on Agenor, and he, too, was happier, or seemed to be; and when they went, to Fiesole one beautiful day she fell on his neck, and blushingly confided to him a great secret. He rejoiced, because he loved her, and because he desired, from the bottom of his heart, she should have that new, pure delight which would bind her to life with strongest chains.

Now he could read Wroblewski's letters, which came more and more frequently--always containing dark, mysterious hints at dangers threatened by Raphael, or complaints that Tondka was growing unblushing in his demands--with lighter heart. He knew the man as an extortioner, who made a mole-hill into a mountain; but this painful story might be hushed up with money, and he was wealthy, though perhaps not so wealthy as he thought.

His position became more difficult at the beginning of summer, when travellers began to come north from Rome and Naples, and when every now and again he saw a well-known face in the street or in the chestnut avenues, generally one of the Galician nobles or an old army comrade. Married gentlemen, who drove by in dignified state with wives and daughters by their side,

stared at him curiously, but without sign of recognition. The only ones who greeted him were either bachelors or husbands whose wives were not with them. The number of acquaintances kept increasing, and his position became more and more uncomfortable, although he delayed his departure because Judith liked the place and required rest.

One day a card was brought him--Baron Victor Oginski. It was one of the friends of his youth. He welcomed his old friend with delight, and Oginski returned the greeting cordially, though he said, gravely: "As you are travelling incognito, of course you wish to pass unnoticed; so even my desire to see you would not have made me so indiscreet as to have called upon you. But, as your friend, I felt it my duty. There is much gossip in the city about you and your companion."

"Whose business is it, I should like to know," cried Agenor, "how and in whose company I live?"

"Nobody's," was the answer, "as long as there is no supposition of a way of life which throws a shadow on you. One knows your ideas as to the requirements of rank, and the origin of the lady is known. Therefore, no one believes you are married to her; and they explain the circumstance of your servants designating her countess as a proof of your too punctilious delicacy. But when some lackey jeered at your servant Jan because of his credulity, he swore by all that was holy that he had himself witnessed baptism and marriage. Of course the story has been bruited about, and though as yet it is not credited fully, still many are doubtful, and I felt called upon, for the sake of our old friendship, to inquire for myself."

"Thank you for your good-will," replied Agenor, "but I must refuse any explanation."

"That is worse than an outright 'yes,'" said Oginski. "The affair remains accordingly a fit subject for gossip."

"I cannot help it."

Oginski took his hat. "Well, as your friend, I counsel you to go as soon as possible to some remote place, since you are unwilling to give an open answer."

Two days later Agenor followed this advice. It was the end of April, and his route lay through Milan to the lakes. There were color, odor, and beauty wherever his eye rested, but Italy was no longer the paradise he had pictured it. Under the influence of that conversation, he had directed that all his letters should be sent to his banking-house in Vienna, so that no one in Galicia should know his address. Indeed, he felt his humiliation so keenly that he left Bellagio after a very brief stay--although he had met no acquaintance there--for a small village seldom visited by tourists. At Iseo, on the lake of the same name, they paused; "for how long?" he asked himself in despair.

As week after week passed quietly and without interruption, he pulled himself together, enough at least to hide his state of mind from Judith, though he did not entirely succeed. It was, however, not a mere reflection from his mind which caused her to pass whole days in gloomy brooding after their departure from Florence.

She did not weep, but this silent grief was deeper than the louder one, and her fever came again. The Austrian physician, who came from Brescia occasionally at Agenor's request, looked grave.

"I am afraid I cannot order your wife to be happy. Speak seriously with her. Perhaps she is afraid of her hour of trial; that is often the case with young wives."

Agenor hesitated some time before he asked her this question. She was silent, and it was only after repeated inquiries she said: "And if it were so, is it not natural for a woman, burdened by her father's curse, to tremble at the thought of the hour which is to make her a mother?"

He attempted to comfort her, and spoke of God's mercy.

"God?" she exclaimed, passionately. "Yes! if I could speak to him, could implore him, could pray to him! But I cannot, Agenor. Formerly, when a grief oppressed me, a care or sorrow, I took my prayer-book and prayed to the God of my fathers. Now I have no prayer-book--"

"We have the same God, and forms are unimportant."

She shook her head gloomily. "I have said that myself, but it is of no use. How can I explain to you what goes around and around in my poor head? One must have a language to pray in. I have forgotten the old one, and do not know the new. You have taken me into many churches to admire the exquisite paintings and the loftiness of the ceilings, but you never asked how they affected me. I shivered when I stepped into those cool halls out of the sunshine; I shivered through and through. It was so strange, so ghostly, how could I ever learn to pray in a church? Perhaps it would have been easier for me if I had been better instructed in your faith; but I cannot even make the sign of the cross, and if I could, how dare I do it? All I know about the Crucified One is that he was a renegade rabbi, for whose sake all my race, even to the present day, have to endure disgrace and persecution."

Agenor bowed his head, and said nothing. Now he understood that that baptism was not

merely a sin against the God of his catechism, but a crime against a young, anxious, thirsting human soul. What could he say? how was he to console her? There was only one thing to which he could exhort her--her duty towards the tiny creature budding under her heart. When he mentioned that, the rigidity left her face, and the tears flowed again.

"Will the child be a pleasure to you?" she asked. "Will it never be a burden?"

When his lips answered for his heart, the effect was what he wished. "I will be strong," she promised. And she kept her word.

The days came again when she smiled and rejoiced in nature. He himself shook off his fear of the world so far as to take short excursions with her--to Brescia, to Lake Garda, and to Verona. In this city, in the Garden of the Franciscans, where they were expected to admire an old stone coffin, the Tomba di Giulietta, they passed the pleasantest hour since that memorable day in Fiesole.

But it was to end sadly enough; for as they were wandering through the gardens containing the sarcophagus, Agenor suddenly started, and insisted on returning to the hotel, even on their departure from the city, urging as a plea that he was not well. But as Judith, a half-hour afterwards, looked on to the street, where her carriage was being made ready, she discovered the reason. A gentleman was speaking to Jan in Polish, who replied very curtly; the same gentleman she had seen, without paying much attention to him, in the garden.

She grew pale, but made no remark; but when, a day or two after, Agenor, observing her moodiness, proposed another excursion, she declined, saying, sarcastically: "It might make you unwell again. Pardon me," she then sobbed, "I know you are not happy, either. You, who are so sought for at home, dare not go out abroad lest your fellow-countrymen should see you and tell that the Jewess is your wife. I will not say that it is a disgrace, such as you regard it, but it is sufficient for me to know you are unhappy for my sake. How miserable that makes me!"

"Think of the child!" he begged. This was his last resource, and even that had now lost its effect.

"It is because I do think of it," she cried in despair, "that I am doubly wretched. How can you love the child of the woman who is a burden to you, and which will bind you still closer? As yet, you have only cursed the hour of our marriage. Soon you will curse the hour of its birth."

They were both wretched, and there seemed no end to this misery, ever new.

"I was a villain! I was mad!" the young man said to himself, as he watched the sunshine playing on the autumnal landscape. "What shall I say when she asks where the child is to be baptized?"

That was his closest and most pressing care, but it was not the only one that burdened him. As yet he paid little attention to the exactions of Wroblewski, but now he began to appreciate the dangers threatening his future and honor by this vampire. What would be the end?

He would never desert Judith, nor yet waken her from her dream. But could he pass his life in this way, in idleness and disgrace, a fugitive startled at the sight of a gendarme, dreading lest he should be asked to show the passports of Count and Countess Nogile, compressing himself into the closest quarters possible when driving through the streets, for fear of recognition by an old acquaintance. It could not continue; was there any chance of escape?

A shrill little voice woke him from his reverie. Down in the garden, in front of the house, the fat Italian nurse, Annunciata, paced up and down, trying to still the crying of the child by her songs. He heard Judith's voice calling her; very probably she was in the breakfast-room, waiting for him. He drew himself up, passed his hand over his face, as if to smooth out all traces of sadness, and then went to the ground-floor.

At the breakfast-room door he was met by the nurse. He bent over and kissed the boy, who stared at him out of his dark, wide-open eyes soberly, even thoughtfully. When he lifted his eyes, he met Judith's fixed inquiringly upon him. He understood. "Poor thing," he thought, "she is watching to see with what expression I kiss the child." He bade her good-morning as naturally as possible. But he could tell by her eyes and the pallor of her complexion that she had cried during the night. And why? Ah! he had no need to ask.

He took his seat opposite her, sipped his tea, and praised the loveliness of the morning. "It is like a spring day, and yet it is late in the autumn."

"Yes," she responded, with a quiver in her voice. "It is the 30th of November."

"Already?" he said, indifferently. "How time--" He did not finish the sentence. Her peculiar intonation struck him, and as he looked at her, "*Mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed, and, sitting beside her, he put his arms around her. "Pardon me! How could I forget it. Why, it is the anniversary of our wedding-day."

She made no answer, but put her arms around his neck and wept quietly. "Let it be," she

whispered, as he tried to soothe her, pressing her face more closely against his shoulder. "It is best so."

She soon dried her tears, and loosed herself gently from his arms. "Sit down opposite me, and let us talk sensibly. We will not make our hearts heavier than they really are, Agenor. We will not ask how the year has passed, and if it were necessary it should have been as it has. But how about the future? Do you intend to remain here?"

"Certainly; for the winter at least. That is, if it pleases you," he answered, quickly. "Otherwise we could go south, to Sicily, perhaps."

She shook her head. "How about going north, home, Agenor?"

"You know," he replied, with forced composure, "that that is impossible."

"No, I do not know it, but I believe you. But are you quite certain about that? You say my father's suit against you, on account of my marriage under age, would bring you under the law. But the punishment cannot be severe, and there is no dishonor attached."

"For a man of my position?"

She lifted her hand expostulatingly. "For a man in your position it is best to manage your own estates, and, above all, it is seemly to be able to look every one in the face, and not to hide one's self in the most secret corners of a foreign land. If it is only fear of punishment, let me entreat of you to go home, for your own sake."

"I have made inquiries," he said, hesitatingly. "If the punishment is really trifling--"

"You are a poor liar," she interrupted. "If you had made inquiries, the answer would have been here long ago. It is not so much the dread of punishment as of taking home a Jewish wife."

"No, no! how often must I assure you of that?"

"What else is it? We are both being ruined by it, Agenor. Cannot you comprehend what I feel when I think we are not able to go home while my father lives, because of his anger. I know he must be very angry, because he has not answered my second letter."

"Have you written him?" the count asked, growing very pale.

"Yes, a few days before my delivery. I could not restrain my fears. There are words in that letter which, if he does not answer, he must be angry indeed. I implore you, let me try it by word of mouth."

He did not hear her. His face became gray, as he thought of the results of this letter. "Everything is lost," he thought. "By this time they know of the fraud."

"How could you do this?" he suddenly asked.

"What!" she cried, and her eyes flashed. "Do you dare reproach me with that letter? Are you not human? have you never had parents? And yet you say you love me!"

"I did not mean it so," he replied. "You are right. We must commence to think of going home. But not before spring. A winter journey from Lake Garda to Galicia, with that delicate child, would be madness. Remember our journey to Fiume!"

"That is an especially difficult road. We can go *via* Vienna."

"The Alps are very unpleasant in winter. Think if anything should happen to the boy. We must not have that on our conscience."

"When, then, do you propose to leave?"

"As soon as it is spring."

"In April. Very well, then. Your word of honor, Agenor."

"They will have arrested me before then," was his thought. "My word of honor," were his words.

"Once more, when is the baby to be baptized? It is six weeks old, and nurse complains she is laughed at on account of the little heathen."

"As soon as possible," he promised. "I have no papers with me to prove my authentic name. I wrote for them, but they have not yet arrived. It is so far."

"Yes, it is far," she sighed, gazing into space. "But you had better make the most of this beautiful day. Go for a row on the lake."

"Won't you go with me?" She declined. He took her cold hand in his, and said, tremulously,

"Judith, whatever happens--" but his throat seemed to contract so as to forbid speech, and he left the room.

Mechanically he seized his hat and went to the lake. As he walked slowly along, one thought was ever present--how could he escape the dangers brought about by this letter? Perhaps by a speedy flight to Egypt or Sicily. But no, if the authorities had really been informed and were determined to prosecute, flight would be useless. The police would already be on his track, and only one thing remained--a bullet in his brain, or a jump into the clear water.

Sitting in the boat and pondering upon these things, he was recalled to himself by the boatman's voice: "Do not lean over so far, Signor Conte. It throws the boat out of its balance." No, he must not do that, unless it should be absolutely necessary, if only for the sake of Judith. "Turn back!" he ordered; and as the little town rose to meet him out of the waves, he made an effort to collect his thoughts.

There was but one course to pursue; to order Wroblewski to spare no trouble to stop further proceedings in the courts. "He has influence in this regard, and will do it to save his own skin," he said to himself. That Herr von Wroblewski had lost his position, and in what manner, the count knew not, the ex-magistrate having considered it wiser to keep the matter to himself; and Herr Stiegle never wrote a line more than was necessary.

The count hastened home and began a letter. But after a few lines the pen dropped from his hand. "How abominable this is!" he thought. "How cowardly! Had any one told me I was capable of this"--and he clenched his fists so that the nails pierced the flesh. But he took the pen again--for it must be done. It was long, however, before he found words in which to make the dubious proposal.

He sealed the letter, wrote another to Stiegle, ordering him to pay Wroblewski ten thousand gulden, and, putting both into a large envelope, addressed it to his Viennese banker. "That, too, is cowardly and knavish," he said to himself, in painful self-condemnation. "When is this lying and cheating to have an end?"

The thought of his child's baptism weighed heavily upon him. The illegitimate child of Judith Trachtenberg, according to the existing imperial law, must be a Jew, and no priest could baptize it till the mother had given her written consent; nor could a priest enter the boy in a register as Count Nogile, or Baranowski, until the marriage certificate of the parents had been produced. What should he do--commit another crime, or tell the truth? Neither was possible. And how long would he be able to resist the importunities of the mother?

That magnificent day was the saddest he had ever known; and as he watched the sun sinking gloriously behind the hills of Tarbole, land and sea aflame in a deep-red light, he looked forward to the morrow with apprehension. It was late before he retired, and his sleep was disturbed by hideous dreams.

When the count woke up, the sun was high in the heavens. His servant, Jan, stood before him. The old man looked frightened. "Pardon me for waking you," he stammered, "but our gracious countess is in a dead faint, and I, old donkey that I am, am to blame."

"What has happened?" exclaimed Agenor, dressing hastily.

"It's because I cannot read," continued the old fellow, whimpering, "otherwise I should have noticed the address and post-office notice, and would not have given her the letter."

"What letter?" cried the count, seizing him by the shoulder, in his excitement.

"A few weeks ago she gave me a letter, just before our little prince was born. 'Jan,' said she, 'take this letter to the post and have it registered.' So I did. Well, I went this morning to fetch the letters, but there was only the paper. I was about to go, when the postmaster says, 'Ah, Jan,' says he, 'you get this back again, for as yet there is no post to the country where this person is.' I asked no questions, but took the letter, and when I went into the breakfast-room where the countess was sitting, and she saw the letter, she cried, 'My father!' and fell down in a swoon. For the letter was addressed to him, and on the other side was written, 'The person addressed is dead.' Hamia, who can read, told me that, and I, old fool that I am--"

The count had heard enough, and was already on his way to the breakfast-room. The maid, Hamia, stood at the door. "Madame la Comtesse is fully conscious again, but wishes to be alone, and has forbidden me to admit any one, even you." But he pushed her aside and entered.

Judith was stretched out on the floor. Her hair hung in confused masses over her pale, rigid face. He went to her; she slowly raised herself on her elbow and looked at him, so that he stood still involuntarily, and dropped his eyelids. He could not look into those glazed eyes.

"Go!" she said, in a low voice, but so distinct that it went through him. Like a man condemned to death, he tottered from the room.

She kept to her own room all day, refusing food and drink. The count was almost beside himself; but Hamia, who was devoted to her mistress, conceived a good idea. In the evening she

took the child, and, going to her mistress, urged her to be sensible, trusting in this way to break up the hardness of Judith's grief. She did not entirely succeed, however, though Judith fondled the baby and was coaxed into taking a little food. Some hours after--it was nearly midnight--she sent for Agenor.

He quickly answered the summons and went to her couch. Looking at her, his heart seemed to stand still with pity and penitence. "Judith, if you only knew what I, too, have to suffer!"

She nodded. "It certainly cannot be pleasant," she said, callously. "But I won't reproach you. I sent for you because I must know something. You will tell me the truth, Agenor. You believe in God and will not lie to me in such an hour."

"Judith," he implored, "do not excite yourself any more to-day. Think of the child."

"So I do," she answered. "I should go mad if I did not. Tell me, Agenor, when did my father die?"

He would have given an equivocal answer, but he could not under the influence of those eyes. "About a year ago."

"Oh!" It was one word, in a tone indicating fearful mental anguish. She shut her eyes and lay still, breathing hard.

"Judith!" he attempted to take her hand.

"Be still!" she hissed. "I am his murderess. Tell me the truth, Agenor. Did he die the day after I fled?"

"No," he assured her. "Some weeks after."

"It is all the same. It was from sorrow about me. Why did you lie in saying he was prosecuting us?"

"It was no lie. He began proceedings and Raphael has carried them on. So I have heard from home."

"It is quite likely. Raphael is a good son, and will avenge his father's death. If he only knew how superfluous it was! 'Revenge is mine,' saith the Lord. If he only knew how God himself has begun the work--and he will carry it out; I feel it. My poor, innocent baby!"

He fell at the foot of her couch, and lifted his hands towards her. "Just because of the child, Judith, it may turn out well."

She shook her head gloomily. "No happiness can be built on curses and lies. Was he dead when I was married to you?"

He made no answer.

"Then, that was the reason I could not go home. But you allowed me to write, and gave me your word of honor you would send the letter. Your word of honor, Count Agenor Baranowski!"

"Consider my position, Judith. You had hardly recovered. The doctor warned me to avoid any fresh excitement. You cannot, you must not, despise me for that."

"But has this been your only lie? Get up. Look me in the face. Am I your wife--am I a Christian?"

His blood rushed to his heart. "Remember--"

"Yes, I know. But the ground is shaking under my feet. It seems as if I must doubt my very eyes and ears. Besides, what do I know of your usages? Perhaps it was only a blind to keep me alive. It is possible, for your friend and counsellor was a scoundrel. If it was a trick, confess it now. I promise you, I will not kill myself, for then my child would have no father, and he must not be left motherless. But I must know the truth. For if I am not a Christian, I shall be able to pray again, and mourn for my father after the manner of my nation. Agenor, you will be the vilest of men if you can lie to me now. Answer! I ask you again--am I a Christian, and am I your wife?"

He felt his knees giving way, and he seized the bedpost to keep himself steady. There was a roaring in his ears, and his heart almost stopped beating. Though he hesitated but a second, it seemed an eternity. When at last he spoke, it was as though he heard some other voice saying, "You are a Christian, and you are my wife!"

CHAPTER IX.

Three weeks had slipped by, and Christmas was close at hand. Day after day the same glowing sunshine flooded lake and mountain. Every one said it was the loveliest December ever known on Lake Garda. And yet in the midst of this beauty of nature, the two in the palazzo by the Porta San Michele walked in the dull, uncertain twilight life.

Judith had recovered quickly. She came to table as formerly, and neither sigh nor reproach passed her lips. The count, too, adapting himself to the new conditions, never spoke of the past. But both felt acutely that a wide, wide gulf had opened between them. They lived as in a cloud, seeing each other dimly, and neither stretched out a hand to the other in compassion or in love.

Only twice during this week had they spoken of anything more than was necessary. The *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* at that time the only large newspaper permitted in Austria, contained one day a lengthy leader concerning the new civil marriage law of the grand duchy of Saxe-Weimar. It was the first of those laws in Europe allowing marriage between Christians and Jews, without a change of faith on the part of the Jews. Judith had just finished reading it as Agenor entered the room. She asked if he knew of it.

He said, "Yes," adding, "it is very curious."

"Truly, and any one educated with us at home would be inclined to think it impossible. But since this miracle has been accomplished in one country, I suppose the others will follow. Perhaps the time will come when it will not be counted a crime for one to have a heart and to follow the mandates of that heart. May I keep this paper? If I had a prayer-book, I would put this in it."

He made no answer, but presently said, "The people in Weimar are rather given to innovation." She had hardly heard it, when an expression of deep pain overspread her countenance.

"Do you believe there is a prayer-book," she asked, "that would do for all mankind, no matter what their confession?"

"I don't know, but I will inquire."

"It would be useless, I suppose. As yet there is no occasion for such a book, but the time may come."

The second conversation, relating to something besides the dinner, the weather, or the health of the baby, took place just after a call from the podestà of Riva. Agenor paled when the chief official of the town was announced. But it was a harmless business he had called about. New-Year's Eve there was to be a festival in Trent for the benefit of the poor of Southern Tyrol. The podestà brought cards of invitation to the wealthy *forestieri* in person, so as to secure a handsome gift. As the stout, olive-complexioned gentleman bowed himself out of the room, elated with the splendid donation he had received, Judith said, "Are you not going?"

"No," was the somewhat surprised reply. "It does not interest me in the slightest degree. Besides, how could I leave you alone?"

"What could happen to me here? I have often thought, though I did not like to say so, that it would be a good thing for you to live for a few weeks in the world. And perhaps it would be--"

"Good for you, too? Has it got so far between us?"

"It would be good for both of us," she said, gently. "Perhaps there would be less restraint between us after a brief separation. Do not say more now," she continued, hastily, as she saw him about to speak. "This cannot be arranged by words, but I beg you to consider my proposal."

She arose and quitted the room.

A week after this conversation Agenor received a letter from his Vienna bankers, Messrs. M. L. Biedermann & Co., saying that he had overdrawn his account considerably, and that though, of course, they had no hesitation in forwarding the sum he asked for, still they would be obliged if he would straighten out matters as soon as possible. They also forwarded him two letters, one of which they had held for a week, the other had just arrived by special post.

The latter was from Stiegle, advising strict economy; the other from Wroblewski, in reply to that of Agenor, written on the 30th of November. He said that Raphael had opened the letter addressed to the deceased, and had placed it with other testimony, but he hoped to be able to evade danger if he received thirty thousand gulden. If they were not sent, he intended to escape disgrace by putting a bullet through his head, and he advised the count to do the same. There were a few lines extra from Stiegle, saying he had managed to secure the wished-for ten thousand gulden, but at forty per cent interest; and as he saw certain destruction looming up in the distance, he gave notice that his situation would be vacant by the end of March.

Agenor crumpled up Wroblewski's letter in an ungovernable rage. He had credited him with a good deal of avarice and falsehood, but not with such dastardly conduct. Owing to his conversation with Judith, he had quite forgotten to countermand the check, and, besides, it would have been too late, and Wroblewski would perhaps regard it as an advance for future services. And now came this letter! He had delivered himself up into the hands of this scoundrel, though he was, perhaps; not entirely helpless, since this letter proved clearly Wroblewski's rascality. Still, this would do no good so long as the count, by his absence, showed how timorous he was. For that reason he ought to go home, see to his estates, and sell one of them. But Judith, could he leave her alone?

Hours passed in these painful reflections, and dinner-time came. He braced himself as best he could, so as to show Judith a cheerful face. It was not a great success, however, for as he lit his cigar after dinner she said, "You had bad news from home to-day. What has happened?"

"Nothing of importance," he answered. "Merely money complications. My cousin's old debts--"

"Then you must go home and arrange them. It is your duty. I will stay here with the baby, and you can fetch us in April, or we can go alone."

"You will be glad to be rid of me?" He said this with a forced smile, but his face was very grave, nevertheless.

She knew what he meant, and said, quietly, "You need have no fear, Agenor. You know well the child would hold me to life, under any circumstances. And how could I cause you such sorrow? No matter how you have erred in other ways, you kept your word and made me your wife. I say it openly, Agenor, I believe it would be a blessing to you and to me if I died a natural death."

"Judith!"

"Forgive me. I ought not to have said it, but it came from my heart, as it were, and forced its way through my lips. And it is perfectly true. Here life is hard enough; what will it be at home? But voluntary death would be a dreadful misfortune for you. Your conscience would never know peace. It is a frightful feeling that the death of a beloved one is on your soul. You, Agenor, shall never experience that. When will you start?"

"Let me consider it. How can I go when your mind is filled with such hideous fancies, and I know you are tormenting yourself in vain?"

"Do not let us talk of it. Words cannot change the circumstances. You ought to go, if only for love of me. I feel I should be better if I could be alone awhile. What else is there to hinder you? Fear of Raphael's revenge and the court? I have thought of it frequently the past few days, and cannot think you have much to fear. The defendant is a count, of an ancient line, who has brought another soul into the Holy Catholic church, while the plaintiff is a common Jew, and the trial will take place in Galicia. Believe me, Agenor, if you had dishonored and deceived me and then kicked me into the street, and I, the betrayed and ruined, had accused you and asked for judgment against you, the judges would have looked upon it as a good joke. I say this without bitterness; it is the unvarnished truth. Again, I say, you must go."

Again he besought time for consideration. "Suppose she finds all out in the meantime? But how can she when her address is known only to myself and the Vienna banker." These were his thoughts. He was convinced he would be unable to detain her in Italy later than April. If he went he might make preparations, and perhaps take counsel with a clever lawyer.

He took his departure soon after Christmas. Even that drew their estranged hearts no closer, despite the gentle and kindly words their lips uttered. She watched him with dry eyes as the carriage rolled through the park gates. "*Au revoir!*" he cried. "*Au revoir!*" she answered, waving her handkerchief.

It was more quiet than ever in the palazzo by the Porta San Michele. Only old Jan, who stayed behind to protect the women, went occasionally into the town. Judith never went beyond the park enclosures. She passed some of her time in caring for her child, some in reading books sent from Innsbruck by Agenor; but for the most part she sat motionless in a brown study.

Faithful Hamia crept about anxiously, continually inventing excuses for going into the drawing-room where Judith sat. This clever girl had entered Judith's service at Czernowitz, during their journey, and knew very little of her mistress's early history. But she knew of her father's death, and her pity made her very sympathetic.

"If the count only knew what I know," she sometimes said, angrily, "he would write oftener." But in this she was wrong. He was not careless, and wrote at every break in the journey. But the longest and most tender letters would not have lightened Judith's heart. He wrote that he had found much to do, and went out very little. Now, he said, briefly, that the fear of the courts was really superfluous, and now, that he had heard Raphael was quite well and was managing the factory with great energy.

She thanked him heartily each time, and assured him that she and the child were well; but her

letters were laconic, and she wrote not one syllable of that which occupied her mind. If she really believed that isolation would heal her sore heart, she deceived herself. Day and night the picture of her father's death-bed was before her eyes; even by the cradle of her baby she heard her father's curse. And perhaps it was well that the illness of Annunciata caused the care of the child to devolve entirely upon the mother. Another nurse could not be found, and they were obliged to give the poor baby artificial food. The care and anxiety which this caused numbed somewhat the other grievous sorrow.

February came to an end. Spring flowers bloomed in the villa gardens, and the breezes were warmer than in June in the north country, where were her thoughts. The baby could now pass long hours in the open air, on the sunny terrace behind the house, where Annunciata, still his nurse, would hold him on her lap, Judith sitting beside him, leaning over now and then to kiss his tiny hands. The boy would smile when he saw his mother and stroke her face, and then only a ghost of a smile would light up her careworn features.

As they were sitting thus one March day, Jan announced a friar who desired to speak with the count. Although Annunciata was unable to understand the message given in Polish, still Jan's voice was lowered to a whisper when he added, "He is from Galicia, and knows our real name. I have told him repeatedly, 'The count is away,' but he always replies, 'Tell him; he is sure to receive me,' and he won't go."

"Bring him here, then," ordered Judith.

The monk, an old bent man, with long white beard, appeared.

"Praised be Jesus Christ!" he began, bowing low. When Judith made no response, he added, "In all eternity, Amen!"

"Do you wish to speak to my husband?" she asked. "He left here just before New Year's, and it is uncertain when he will return. He is now on his estate in Podolia."

"Most gracious countess," said the old man, in a quavering voice, "I must speak to him. Please tell him."

"If you do not believe me," said Judith, curtly and proudly, "I have nothing more to say."

The man fell back a step. "Forgive," he pleaded, "but it is so terrible for me, so terrible!" he repeated, in such a changed voice that Judith regarded him with astonishment. "I have made this long journey," he resumed, in his old weak voice, "only that I might speak to him."

"Can you tell me?"

"No, that is impossible;" but he retained his position, notwithstanding.

"What else do you want?" she asked.

The monk answered nothing, but Jan said, "The reverend gentleman would not despise a meal and a small gift, perhaps."

"You can give him both," said Judith, turning again to the child. When she looked up again the monk had followed Jan into the hall.

"Curious," mused Judith. "How did the man find his way here? Even Agenor's letters reach me through the bankers, and what did he want?"

An hour later, during dinner, Jan announced, "The old fellow is still in the servants' hall. Things are not quite in order."

"How?"

"When Hamia took him his dinner, he started. I saw quite plainly how he shuddered and trembled. But she says she does not know him. Then, again, the old man is guzzling more than three young men would. I have warned him that this Veltliner is the devil himself. But he keeps pouring it down, groaning he does not know what to do."

"Give him two francs and send him out of the house," ordered Judith.

Shortly after she was in her sitting-room, writing to Agenor describing this visit, when Hamia came running in, pale as death, and trembling all over.

"Most gracious countess," she stammered, in great excitement, "the monk is a swindler. He is Tondka, the scoundrel; I know him."

"What do you mean?"

"Ignatius Tondka, who was clerk to the lawyer with whom I was in service at Czernowitz. He courted me then and wanted to marry me, but luckily I found out that he was a swindler and that the police were after him. He used to dress himself like a priest and cheat the people."

"But the monk is an old man!"

"He has a false beard. For it came off in Jan's hands when he took hold of it. When Jan told him to go, he kept asking for more wine, yelling, 'I can demand what I wish in this house.' He raised his fist to strike Jan, but he was so drunk he fell down and Jan on top of him. When I heard the noise I rushed in, and saw Jan getting up with the beard in his hands, but the monk lay still. 'Who is that?' I cried, and then I recognized the scamp. 'So it's you! I will spoil your game of playing priest. I'll fetch the police on the spot.' No sooner had I said that than he grew almost sober with fright. He got up and said, 'You are mistaken. I do not know you.' 'What,' I cried, 'I do not know my old lover! You just wait, you villain.' Then he whispered, 'Be quiet, as you love your life!' 'Rubbish,' said I, 'I won't spare a cheat and scoundrel like you. Jan, pitch him out!' But Jan must have seen him before, too, for he stared at him and turned quite pale. 'Where have I seen that face?' he kept saying. 'You have never seen me,' said Tondka. 'Yes, I have,' said Jan, 'in Borky.' But you are pale also, gracious countess."

Judith's face had indeed grown ashen. Every drop of blood seemed to have oozed from it. She sank back into her arm-chair and murmured, "Go on, go on."

"There is nothing more to tell, and why are you so frightened? Ought I not to have told you? I thought I ought, as Jan is like that old woman in the Bible who turned to stone. He stands there saying, 'In Borky! in Borky,' and Tondka answers, 'No, no!' But, *mon Dieu*, you are fainting."

So it seemed. Judith's eyes were closed and her head bent low on her heaving bosom. But she mastered her weakness and arose. "I must speak to him."

"With Jan--shall I fetch him?"

Judith shook her head and moved on. But her knees shook so that she would have fallen had not Hamia supported her. "For God's sake," cried the girl, "what is the matter? Where do you wish to go?"

"Give me your arm," said Judith, and they went to the servants' hall.

The door of the large, low room stood wide open. Jan was by the table, opposite him the stranger, whose knavish face, with his short cropped hair, peered curiously out of the monk's hood. The false beard was on the floor by the side of a broken bottle. The poor faithful servant had just emptied his money-bag on the table, and the tears rolled down his cheeks. "Here are all my savings," he sobbed. "Two hundred and four gulden. They will take you home, and the count will give you what you want. But go, for God's sake, go! The poor thing must not find it out."

Judith entered. "Thank you, Jan. But I wish to speak with the man in private."

The poor fellow staggered backward. "My most gracious countess," he moaned, "he lies! he lies!"

"Go," she repeated, "or I shall not be able to stand it."

Weeping bitterly, he crept out of doors, and motioned Hamia away, who was plaguing him with questions.

"We must watch her day and night, for the lake is close at hand."

The conversation lasted but a few minutes. Then Tondka came slinking out with the beard in his hand. "Really, Herr Jan, I am downright sorry for her. But I am to send you in. She has something for you to do."

Jan entered the room. Judith was sitting on a bench by the table. "Take this," she said, giving him a key. "Open the safe in my room, and give the man the three hundred francs I have promised him. Then send Hamia here."

The girl, who arrived a minute after, found her mistress senseless on the floor.

It was a deep swoon. The doctor, who was called by Jan, remained until late in the night, seemingly very anxious. "Brain fever is threatening," he said, when leaving. "I am afraid the case will be a serious one."

He was mistaken, for when he came the following day he found his patient out of bed. She had aged suddenly, and looked like a shadow, and it shocked him greatly to see silver threads among her auburn tresses.

"My dear madam, I do not know what has happened, but I hope you will remember you are a mother."

"I assure you I will not forget it," and she thanked him for his sympathy. He left her with a quiet mind.

Hamia was relieved, too, when she heard her mistress talking as sensibly and reasonably as ever. Only Jan was suspicious. He feared it would not end well, and prayed all day long that God

would preserve the balance of her mind. His anxiety was still greater when she sent for him in the evening, and said: "You were about to sacrifice your savings for me. Since you love me that much, will you lend them to me if I ask you?"

"With the greatest pleasure; but there is still a good sum in the safe."

"Still, I ask them from you. I will certainly repay you."

He took the money to her, but said sorrowfully to Hamia: "Now I am sure she is not right in her mind."

He was to discover the next morning that she was perfectly sane.

CHAPTER X.

It was the first day of spring, according to the calendar, but the moors of Podolia were as melancholy and dreary as if sunshine and blue skies were thousands of miles away.

Count Baranowski shivered as he drove along the half-frozen roads, through wind and rain, from Borky to the county town, to keep an appointment with his lawyer. But it was not altogether the fault of the weather, for after nearly an hour spent in the well-warmed room of his legal adviser, he was forced to pace up and down and rub his hands, to dispel the chill and heaviness that seemed to paralyze his limbs. "Almost three months," he groaned, "and what has been accomplished?"

"If that is intended as a reproach to me," said the lawyer, "I decline to accept it. What I could do, that I have done. I have straightened out your finances, and as economically as possible. Herr Stiegle is reengaged, and I cannot aid you in shaking off Wroblewski. Generosity is of no avail there. If you offered him twenty thousand gulden this year as hush-money, he would take it thankfully, and next year would demand twenty thousand more. If you refused to give them, things would drop back into their old conditions. You can never intimidate the man. His letters show his rascality. But your letters prove you have committed sacrilege, and that you have tried to induce him to bribe the judges. Dare you defy him? I advised you to do so once, but, since I know the man, I withdraw that advice. He is a thorough type of an easy-going scoundrel, extortioner, and spendthrift. All he receives from you is owing to the usurers. Your fear of him is his only resource. If that source of income is shut up, he will be worse off than a beggar, and his words, 'Then I will look to the jail to support me, where I will amuse myself with my fellow-convict, Baranowski,' are pretty true. Ought you to fear his confession? Yes. The deception practised on the girl would not count, but the breaking of the law, especially the act of sacrilege, would lead to the most serious results. I sum them up as they actually stand; morally, perhaps, they should be reversed."

"I think so, indeed," said the count, gloomily. "When I think of the poor creature, it pains me to the heart."

"Then, possibly, you have thought of what I was about to advise?"

"Do you mean that I should confess all and have a real baptism and marriage? I have frequently thought of that, but I fear my repentance comes too late. Once, when she had doubts, I lied to her basely--it was the dirtiest trick of my life--and I am afraid that if she found this out she would die rather than live with me."

"Count on the love she bears her child. At any rate, you ought to try it. I am confident you will succeed. I give you this advice as a lawyer. Then you can leave Wroblewski to his fate, and turn him out of the home you like best, yet must avoid because of his presence in it. Very likely he will bring a suit against you, but the judgment will be trifling, and you will no longer rank as a dishonored man. The bishop will not interfere, as you will have been the means of bringing a soul into the church, and your temporal judge, Herr Groze, Wroblewski's successor, is a man of the most delicate sense of justice. I am quite sure he would say, 'The count has sinned, but he has also suffered, and will now expiate his guilt.' However, I give this advice not only as lawyer, but also as friend. You are not happy now?"

"God knows I am not."

"No one could be with such a burden on his conscience. Free yourself from this burden. Regard for your position in society can no longer hinder you."

"No," said Agenor, bitterly. "Truly not. My position could not be worse. I am ostracized."

"You paint things too black. But bad stories are in circulation. I have many times been surprised that the story of a sham marriage, coming from the words of your valet in Florence, should have found so much credence. I suppose it is because, unhappily, the truth is, in this case, the most slanderous. If a worse construction could have been put upon it, the real truth would have remained unknown. Now every one has an opportunity to prove his orthodoxy by lifting his eyes in horror at the sacrilegious acts performed in the chapel at Borke, and his chivalry by damning your conduct towards the girl as unworthy a nobleman. It has actually gone so far, they are pitying the Jewess. I should not have believed this if I had not heard it with my own ears. This is known generally, but it is supposed to be a secret. Herr Groze must not hear of it, for that would be denunciation. How public opinion would go if you brought the Jewess here for a few months as your legitimate wife I am unable to guarantee; but it would be no worse for you, I think. The good and noble-minded, though in verity they are scarce, would think of you differently."

"You are right," said Agenor, as he arose. "And what is to be, shall be soon. I will drive to town today, arrange with Stiegle for my absence, and start for Riva to-morrow. Will you procure the necessary papers, and send them after me?"

"No commission could be more agreeable to me," rejoined the lawyer, shaking Agenor's hand cordially. "*Bon voyage.*"

When the count drove back over the moor, the weather changed for the worse. Rain and snow fell together, freezing as soon as they touched the ground; and the coachman drove along the slippery road at snail's pace. But the count was no longer cold. His cheeks were ruddy and his eyes bright, and it had been long since he had felt so well. He had marked out a straight, narrow path in which to tread; but he felt it would make him at peace with himself, and perhaps eventually lead to happiness.

The rain fell heavier than ever, accompanied by a cutting north wind. Twilight was approaching, and honest Fedko was obliged to stop occasionally to make sure he had found the right road. "The weather is not fit for a dog. My lord," he said, apologetically, "I know the moor and its tricks, but I never knew it to be so bad as this, except once, that day when--"

Suddenly he remembered that the allusion to the day when the Jewess threw herself into the water might not be pleasing to his master. In his confusion, he lashed the horses so that they broke into a furious gallop. In the dimness, Fedko overlooked a small cart with a linen covering, which was creeping along ahead. He drove so close to it that the wheels became interlocked. He dismounted, cursing, to free the wheels; and the other coachman, evidently a Jew, cursed too. "You are driving as if you had the emperor," he cried.

"I have not the emperor," Fedko answered, with pride; "but his lordship, Count Baranowski, would like to get on a bit faster."

"I," said the Jew, "am only driving a poor sick Jewish woman and her child, but they are human."

"Well, well," said good-natured Fedko, gently, "this little delay will do them no hurt," and, lashing his fiery steeds, he soon lost sight of the other vehicle.

Fedko had reached the castle long before the cab came in sight of the lights of Roskowska. The Jew turned. "Woman," he called, "here we are in Roskowska. You can get milk for the child in the inn."

"Praise be to God!" answered a feeble voice. "Please stop. I am afraid the child has taken more cold, he is so restless."

"But you have put all your wraps on the little one, and are cold yourself. You are sinning against your own health. However, I should be a fool to quarrel with a mother."

A baby's voice sounded from the cart. "Only two minutes longer. Where shall I drive?"

There was no answer. "Woman, don't you hear? Where shall I stop?"

"In the street. I will get out in the street," answered a gentle, trembling voice.

"Because you are so warmly clad?" growled the man. "But just as you like. Here is the inn."

He aided her to alight, but when he saw how she tottered he attempted to take the child from her. She resisted, and so he took her into the tap-room. The large, dismal place was crowded with peasants and cattle-drivers. The air was foul and heavy with the smell of oil, bad tobacco, and steam generated by the stove-heat acting on the dripping garments.

"This won't do for you," said the hostess, compassionately, as the coachman ushered in the new guest, opening the door into an adjoining room, at once her bed and dwelling room. She brought the milk immediately, protesting better could not be found in the wide world, and then watched the stranger filling the feeding-bottle and giving it to the child.

"Don't you nurse the baby yourself?" she inquired. "Poor thing! I suppose you are too weak."

The stranger had pulled the cloth which covered her head well down in front, so that her face could not be seen distinctly, but the hostess felt convinced it was pale and emaciated. "What a bonny boy! It is a boy, is it not? How merrily he uses his little legs! I suppose you have not travelled far, he is so wide awake. Have you come from Tluste?"

"No," answered the stranger, "we have been travelling for weeks. But I have done the best I could for him, and compassionate people are to be found everywhere."

"For weeks!" exclaimed the woman. "In winter! Then you have come from the neighborhood of Cracow, perhaps!"

"Still farther away."

"Still farther? Then from Aschkanas or Prague? There is a large congregation there. But, from your accent, I should have judged you belonged to this neighborhood. Will you spend the night with me?"

The stranger declined. "I must go on into the town."

"Because you fancy the inns there will be better," said the woman, somewhat hurt. However, she resumed, in a pitying tone, "How you are trembling! Have you a fever? Just wait; I'll bring you some soup, and if you are poor you need not trouble about the pay." And before an answer could be given she was away into the kitchen.

But the stranger was not to be left alone long. First came the coachman. "Rest yourself, madam. I have plenty of time."

Then a bearded man poked his head into the room. "God's welcome! I am the landlord. The soup will be here directly." Finally an old woman entered, at the sight of whom the stranger started, pulling her head-cloth still closer over her face. But the poor little woman with her shrivelled-up face, with its prominent hooked nose, did not bother her. She only said "Good-morning," and then sat down at the other end of the table and gazed into vacancy with her bleared eyes.

The landlady came, bearing a steaming bowl. "Welcome, Aunt Miriam," she said to the old woman. "It is nice of you to come here instead of sitting over there alone in your little room."

She placed the bowl before the stranger. "Help yourself. I have put some chicken in it; not much, but as much as I could." She then turned again to the old body. "It is not right, Aunt Miriam, for you to weep so much."

"Ah!" sobbed Miriam Gold, "I cannot help it. It is as if my soul were bleeding. She was my child, my flesh, my blood!"

"Well, I said little against it at first. But now she has been dead four months, and you are weeping yourself blind. Must we not all die? Did I not have to bury my Radel--and my Rachel--but I will not hurt you."

"I know what you were going to say: that your Rachel was a good child and my Lea was not. But even if she did join the church and marry a Christian, have you it in written testimony, Aunt Malke, that God in heaven--praised be his name!--looks upon her as you do?"

"Yes, Aunt Miriam," said the landlady, solemnly, "we have that testimony. There it is," and she pointed to a copy of a Hebrew Bible which lay in the window. "God does not wish a Leah to become a Barbara."

"We won't discuss it," answered the old woman, wiping her eyes with her apron. "Leave me that one comfort--that God will prove a merciful judge to my poor child. When she was dying she remembered she had been called Leah, and sent and begged me to go to her. But I was cowardly, and let myself be persuaded to offer this last insult to my poor child. She is at rest now; but I am devoured by remorse, and therefore I weep, Aunt Malke, and shall continue to weep till--"

"You know I advised neither for nor against going. I told you to ask the rabbi and other pious men. It was not a woman's business."

"It was a woman's business. Who has a right to step between a mother and her child? They intimidated me. God did not wish it; and when I went to Raphael, he told me my allowance should not be withdrawn if I went, though he could not advise it. 'Your daughter is not dying,' he said. 'She has been long dead. I would not go in your place. You are happier than I, for your Lea did not become a harlot, like my sister. But,' he said--"

A cry of pain, sharp and shrill, rang through the room, so that both women jumped. "What ails you?" they cried, running to the stranger. She had covered her face with her hands, her cloth had slipped from her head, so as to reveal her auburn hair streaked with gray.

The hostess gazed at the flowing hair with disgust, as if a nestful of adders had crawled to

meet her.

"What's that?" she exclaimed. "Are you not an honest Jewess, who wears her own hair?"

Miriam stood as if paralyzed. "Merciful God!" she murmured; "this hair! the unfortunate creature!"

"Answer!" cried the hostess to the stranger. "This is a Jewish house. One wishes to know who one is receiving."

Miriam went to her. "Be quiet. Don't you know her? It is Judith!"

"Judith!" shrieked the landlady. "Away with her!"

Judith dropped her hands. "I am going; I am going."

The landlady gazed with wide-open eyes at the pale face which, so it seemed, she had seen but yesterday beautiful and comely, and at the bent form, shaken with fever. "God hath shown her his hand," she muttered.

Miriam had rushed up to Judith. Tears coursed down her cheeks in streams as she embraced the slender form with passionate affection, and stroked the thin face with her withered hands. "My poor darling! God has sent you to me."

The hostess looked at her in surprise. Fierce as was her anger towards this renegade, yet her eyelids smarted at the sight. She turned to the door. "Make it short, Aunt Miriam, for I must tell my husband, and he won't stand it." But her thought was, "How sympathetic Miriam is! I would be, too, if I did not fear God."

Miriam's pity thawed even the unspeakable misery of Judith. "I know, Miriam--I know how you have always loved me."

"I do love you. You were so beautiful and good. Ay, so good! When I heard you had been seen in the count's garden a sudden pain pierced my heart, almost as great as the day my husband said to me, 'Wife, it would have been better had you never given birth to a child. Our Lea is courting with Wassilj.' In my anxiety I ran and told you my child's story to warn you. It was hard, but I did it out of love. Alas, alas! it was in vain. How I have lamented for you! I dared not pray, for they say it is a sin to pray for a renegade. You are a Christian, are you not?"

Judith shook her head.

"Oh," said the old woman, joyfully, "then much can be made good yet. You refused baptism, and so were thrown off by the count?"

"No, I am a Jewess, and yet I am a renegade. I am a miserable creature, doomed in this world and the world to come."

"Not in the world to come, Judith," said Miriam, gravely. "One as old as I, who has experienced so much of evil in her dealings with human beings, must feel that God is more merciful than man. How you have suffered! I do not need to ask. It is written on your face."

A loud noise was heard outside. "She must go!" said a man's voice. "She found no mercy with her own father." It was the landlord. Between his scoldings could be heard his wife's voice in gentle expostulation.

"Come," urged Miriam, "my room is warm, and I live but a few doors from here. You can spend the night with me."

Judith carefully wrapped up the child. "Thank you," she said, "but you shall not get into trouble on my account. You have to depend on the charity of your neighbors, and they would be angry with you."

"Let them be," cried the old woman. And she stood erect, her withered features glowing with enthusiasm. "Though I die of hunger, I shall bless the day when your foot crosses my threshold. For God sent you to me. He has heard the daily and hourly prayer that I have made since my poor child died. Then I wrung my hands and cried, 'Oh, that I could atone for my cowardice and cruelty! Of what use are lamentations for those already dead? Of what avail is repentance, merciful God, who wills that men also should be merciful?' But he knew, and I can now repay to the living what I owe the dead. Come, come with me!"

"I cannot; I must go to Raphael."

"No, no; spare yourself that pain. You heard what was said."

"I must." She attempted to rise, but her strength failed. "I must," she repeated, and this time she succeeded. But she swayed to and fro, she was so shaken by fear; and when Miriam took the child from her arms she did not resist.

The door was thrown open, and the landlord entered. "Leave, or--" He stopped as he saw she was prepared to go. The sight of her misery seemed to render him speechless.

"Twelve kreuzer," he murmured, as she asked her indebtedness. He took the coppers, however, with unwillingness.

"Consider it," pleaded Miriam, as they walked towards the cart. "If you wish to look Raphael up, do it to-morrow, after you have rested.

"It must be to-day," Judith answered. "My fever is growing worse and worse. The physician in Thuste said I would be seriously ill. To-morrow I may be unconscious, and may die. Drive to the large house opposite the monastery," she said to the man, who stood sulkily beside his horses.

"I know," said the man, in a surly voice. "Since I have been paid, I must do it. But if I had known in Tarnopol who you were--"

He did not finish the sentence, but lashed the horses till they galloped into the road. Once more in the mud, they fell into a walk. Judith sat still, pressing her baby close to her bosom, her teeth chattering with the chill. Miriam again entreated her to wait till tomorrow. "You are already half dead."

"It must be. But my thoughts are growing confused, and I must tell it to one soul at least, while I am able to speak. The guilty must not escape punishment. Listen, Miriam, to the manner in which the count treated me."

She told her story in short, confused sentences. Miriam could not quite understand it, only this was clear, that the poor creature had been frightfully cheated. "Poor child," she sobbed, putting her arms around the trembling girl. When the cart halted before the house she begged to be allowed to prepare Raphael for the meeting.

But Judith would not hear of it. As she alighted, and stood once more before the house where she had passed the happy, sunny, well-guarded days of her life, the house she had longed for since she had been abroad, her strength nearly failed her. She tottered, and would have fallen in spite of Miriam's assistance had not a stronger arm come to her relief. It was the coachman of another carriage which was standing before the door. "Are you made of stone?" he shouted, angrily, after Judith's driver, who never left his seat, but drove away without caring for the two women.

The Jew turned. "You can earn God's thanks with her," he cried, sneeringly. "I don't grudge it to you," and then was swallowed up in the fog.

Judith pulled her strength together, and, with her child on her arm, followed by Miriam, she went into the passage, and, without knocking, entered her father's study. The room was dimly lighted, and Raphael sat, writing a letter. When he heard the door opening, he looked around. A half-suppressed cry escaped his lips as he stared, with horror and disgust, at the unfortunate girl, who stood like a ghost before him.

"Away! away!" he shouted, pointing to the door with shaking hand.

"Raphael!" she sobbed, falling on her knees. Miriam stepped forward, and, taking hold of him by his *talar*, cried, despairingly, "Have mercy! She has come home to die."

He freed himself, and drew back towards the door into the adjacent room. It was hideous to behold him as he stood there, his pale lips half open, his waxy face distorted, his right hand seeking the door-handle and his left buried in his tangled black hair, a picture of such insane fury and horror that the old woman shuddered. Some seconds passed; neither he nor Judith moved. It was only when the child in her arms began to cry that his consciousness seemed to return.

"Take her away!" he cried to Miriam. The voice was hoarse, the words almost indistinguishable. "The burgomaster has her share of the inheritance. There is nothing for her here."

"Have pity!" pleaded Miriam. "You were carried at the same bosom. Remember her grave has been prepared for her between that of your father and of your mother."

"Yes, more's the pity!" he shouted, madly. "A parricide does not deserve it."

Judith groaned and fell prostrate. The child slipped from her arm and screamed. Miriam seized the baby and held it up. "Raphael," she cried, "have mercy upon the innocent child!" But he did not even hear her. He had left the room, and Miriam was alone with the unconscious girl.

"Help!" cried the poor old woman. "Father in heaven, have mercy!"

Her cry was answered. The door opened, and an old gentleman, with a rugged bronze face and white hair and moustache, entered.

It was Dr. Reiser. "Be quiet!" he ordered, for Miriam, at sight of him, had begun to cry much louder with joy than she had just done with despair. He looked at Judith, and turned away deeply

moved. He had no need to ask who she was or what had happened. He rushed to the door, called to his coachman, who was waiting (for the doctor had been making a call on the magistrate on the floor above), for his case of medicines. He then bent his energies to bringing his patient out of her swoon. His only assistants were Miriam and the coachman; for old Sarah, who once looked through the open door, ran away timidly when Miriam called her.

At last Judith opened her eyes, but the doctor saw immediately that her mind was wandering. "My grave!" she shouted wildly, trying to free herself from the hands of her custodians. "I want my grave!"

Not until this paroxysm was over could the doctor carry her to his carriage. "Take her to me," begged Miriam. "I have a good bed and a warm room."

Dr. Reiser knew of no other refuge, for she would have been refused admittance both in Christian and Jewish hospitals; the nearness of Miriam's home to his own was an advantage. So he ordered the coachman to drive to Roskowska by the most direct route, which was past the castle.

"Curse him!" cried the old woman, as they passed the brilliantly lighted windows of the castle. "There he is, rioting with his friends. What does he care for his victim and her child?"

The doctor made no answer, but probably thought much the same. But they were mistaken. If any punishment could have been great enough to atone for his sin, surely he was suffering it now. He paced his study, tortured by all the furies of fear and remorse, and read a letter which had just arrived from Riva.

Hamia told of the occurrences of the past few days, and the disappearance of her mistress. How they had engaged neighbors to search the lake, when a driver from Mori brought them her farewell greetings, and the assurance to Jan that his loan should be repaid. "It is not for this, but because we are so anxious about our gracious mistress and the dear little boy, that we beg Monsieur le Comte to give us permission to go home."

Too late! the avalanche was already descending. Nothing could now be made good--nothing hid. She was coming home as his mortal enemy, to deliver him up to disgrace. Unable to control his emotions, he paced the room till his feet failed him, while his pale lips murmured ceaselessly, now aloud, now under his breath--"Too late! too late!"

CHAPTER XI.

That same evening Raphael's neighbors heard the news. The following morning it passed from mouth to mouth, exciting universal horror and surprise. God had avenged the sin against his holy name, and hurled the sinner in the dust.

Judith Trachtenberg had come home a beggar, and sick unto death; and if she died, as those who had seen her thought she must, the account would be squared. There was no further occasion for pity or persecution. And because God himself had judged her, they praised Raphael for not having stayed his avenging arm, and blamed Miriam for showing compassion. "She will spoil her chance of future salvation." The milder ones said: "Besides the responsibility she has in regard to her own child, she is now assuming this." But the rougher Jews who, impelled by curiosity, had surrounded the little house in Roskowska since early morning, in the chance of catching a glimpse of the victim of God's wrath, judged differently. And when the old woman came out and entreated them either to go away or to make less noise, only a few complied with the modest request, the majority crying, "Shame upon you, to bring disgrace on the congregation!"

But the little old woman, who crept about generally under the overwhelming consciousness of her misfortune and bowed in humility before the humblest, gave way now not one step. She stood there, drawn up to her full height, with that sort of glorified expression on her withered face as had been there the previous evening when it dawned upon her that God had thus shown her a way of atonement. "Shame upon you!" she cried. "What do you know of God, and of what is disgrace in his sight? Go back, I say!" and there was something in her face and voice which awed them into obedience.

But only for a second. Then some one cried, "Have you found a Christian to marry you?" and these insulting words loosed the ban. However, help came to Miriam. One of the elders of the congregation, old Simeon Tragmann, came up, and, standing in front of the woman, said to the crowd, authoritatively, "Go! When God speaks, let man keep silence. Go! I command it in the name of your dead benefactor. If it was his wish that the sinner should be buried at his side, it

was also his wish that she should be allowed to die in peace."

Sullenly they left the house, but they gathered together in knots in the street, clenching their fists and speaking with bated breath. Curiosity chained them to the spot, though they could not have said for what they were waiting. It was only the feeling that such an unheard-of circumstance must have some result.

For a time they waited in vain. Only the doctor, who had already been there at break of day, entered again. But while he was paying his second visit a carriage drove up in which the burgomaster was seated. When he saw the gathering of people, he felt greatly tempted to make a speech; but he remembered in time that he had come to see his ward, and so passed into the sick-room.

There he gave Miriam a large sum of money for Judith's use, inquiring of Dr. Reiser as to her condition. The doctor had no definite answer to give; he could only say she was suffering from a severe attack of nervous fever, and he did not know how it might end.

The burgomaster felt moved to give expression to his sympathy in some eloquent words, and, having once heard his own mellifluous tones, he passed into an oration in praise of Miriam and her generosity. But the old woman interrupted him curtly with a request that he should not excite the invalid, which request the doctor emphasized still more energetically by taking the Demosthenes by the arm and leading him to the door.

Then there was a sight which rewarded the on-lookers for their waiting. An equipage came in full speed from the castle, and stopped in front of the house. Count Agenor alighted, and, hastening to the two men, seized the doctor's hand, asking, "How is she?"

Dr. Reiser gave a cautious answer, nor was his manner the most affable in the world.

"I must see her. She must be brought to the castle at once, both she and my boy. I cannot leave her here."

The doctor cleared his throat dubiously: "We must first consider that. The sight of you would affect her seriously."

Just then Miriam rushed into the passage, placing herself in front of the count. "Go away!" she screamed. "Go away!" she repeated, with determination. "Judith and her child shall remain here."

"My good woman," said the count, soothingly, "I am very grateful to you for your kindness, but she will have better air and better attention at the castle."

"I do not require your thanks," returned Miriam, almost in a whisper, and evidently controlling herself with great difficulty. "It is not every one who can be so merciful to Judith as you have been. But Judith shall stay here with me, and so shall her baby. No one can care for her better than I; and as for the air--there is no good air in your castle, Monsieur le Comte; it kills--"

"I demand my rights!" replied Agenor. "I want my family."

"Hush!" and Miriam went close to him, and whimpered in his ear: "You want your wife, were you going to say? Do not force me--"

He drew back, and was silent. "Doctor!" he said, imploringly. But the old gentleman shook his head. "I fear I cannot help you. Come, gentlemen, the woman is needed inside."

A few hours later the rumor of Judith's death spread through the town. Hundreds went to Roskowska to find out for a certainty. But the report was false. Perhaps it originated with the thought in the minds of the people that she could not recover. God had judged her; her grave was in readiness; it was in order for her to die.

But as she did not, and the doctor reported her to be gradually recovering, the people, both Jews and Christians, became restless. How were they to judge her? In what light should they regard her? Yet, for all that, there was but one individual in the whole town who wished for her death with his entire heart.

That was Herr Ludwig von Wroblewski. Her recovery threatened his safety. He had nothing to fear from the count; but if she lived, and informed against him, his pleasant, comfortable life was ended. He would have to exchange his palatial residence for a lowlier dwelling-place; and that the count would have to share this with him proved a poor consolation.

The more favorable the bulletins, the more sleepless his nights; and when, three weeks after Judith's return, he heard she was able to be about, he begged Agenor for an audience. Although the count permitted him to occupy rooms in his house, and had not dared refuse his most insolent requests, yet he had had but one short conversation with him since his return, early in January.

Agenor had avoided him assiduously, and Wroblewski had been obliged to deal with the lawyer. "He is a coward," thought the ex-magistrate, "and for that reason he dare not refuse to see me."

But Agenor did refuse, and Wroblewski had to resort to his pen. He described in vivid colors the reports that had been afloat in aristocratic circles regarding the sham-marriage, and were now well known for miles around. No one doubted them, and it was a mystery why Groze had not taken the case up. How would it be if Judith made a declaration? Even then there would be no danger for him. It was his friendship for the count which induced his anxiety.

Even this touching letter was left unanswered; and when Wroblewski inquired of the lawyer regarding it, the latter replied that the count had nothing to fear from the mother of his child, and that if she made an affidavit, the consequences would be disagreeable to Herr von Wroblewski principally, since the testimony of Ignatius Tondka would prove that it was he who bore the lion's share of the responsibility in this dirty matter. Tondka had already placed himself at the lawyer's disposal for that purpose.

It was an evil hour for the ex-magistrate when he received this information, for as he had not had any letters from Mohilev lately, he had sent no money, but used the funds for himself. Now, suddenly, his guilty confederate appears again on the scene. "Bah!" he thought, "if the count is not afraid, I need not be. For he has his reputation to lose, and I nothing," Nevertheless, he was not quite at his ease.

Perhaps he overestimated the count's position. Perhaps Baranowski, too, had little to lose in the estimation of people. Judith's return had accentuated the reports circulated about him; and whether his old friends disapproved of so much fuss on account of a Jewess, or whether they really disapproved of his actions, they all agreed in condemning him.

The contempt with which they regarded him had caused him much discomfort during the first weeks of his return, but it was trifling now in comparison with this new affliction which burdened his soul--his repentance and his terror of the law. All the good and evil in his nature seemed to have united to sharpen his agony. His love for his victim, his longing to make expiation for his crime, his desire to regain his old self-respect, and again that false idea of honor that made him think his sin a lesser evil than marriage with a Jewess.

"She must not die!" he cried, in mad fear, to the old doctor, whom he visited almost daily, and in the same breath, with vehement earnestness, "she must not accuse me!" It did not seem clear which evil he dreaded most.

Dr. Reiser, who at first was very hard on him, grew at last to pity the tortured man, and at his request promised to make an attempt to act as mediator. But careful though he was, at the first intimation the pale cheeks of the convalescent flushed, and she raised her hand in protest. "Do not speak of him to me, please. I am not strong enough to bear it. When I regain my strength I will remember him."

"So as to ruin him?"

"So as to do my duty to myself, my child, and my brother. You do not know how he has misused me. He even tried to rob me of my inheritance."

"No! surely not that."

"I mean my grave, the best that remained to me. Ah! it was more than I dared to hope. You look at me curiously, doctor, but my brain is perfectly clear, and I see everything now as it really was, his cowardice and baseness! How great they were--how great!"

"Let us drop the subject," said the doctor, taking her by the hand. "I see you hate him, and I have nothing more to say."

"Yes, I hate him," she replied, sullenly, "but I would not wrong him. I can understand, and in a certain measure forgive, his deception. How could he know a Jewess is a human being and has honor and a heart? Besides, I know that scoundrel urged him on and arranged matters for him--even his conscience. In his way he loved me. I can even understand that mean trick, the sham marriage, to which he was led by Wroblewski. He, a Baranowski! It seemed his only way of escape. He robbed me of my honor; he gave me in exchange his protection and his fidelity. But he robbed me of something still more sacred without giving an equivalent. He stole my faith, and gave me in its place--some drops of water from the hand of a swindler! This crime could not seem to him as grave as the first, and he feared I might be suspicious. But can that excuse him? May a man rob another of his most precious possession in order to hide another crime? And it might have been so different. Had he known how blindly I trusted him, the most stupid excuse as to baptism would have sufficed, and this mockery might have been avoided. But of that he had no thought. Has a Jewess a soul? does she need a creed? And when I told him I did, and he saw that, shut out in overwhelming darkness, I was perishing for warmth and light, his only sensation was annoyance because he was reminded of his crime."

"Suppose he had felt otherwise, what could he have done? Ought he to have had you baptized afterwards, or converted to his faith without this formality? Would this have been a lesser offence?"

"As I view it, yes! If I were a Catholic I should think of it as a terrible misfortune, but his guilt would not be so great. Furthermore: when I heard of my father's death, and I looked upon myself

as a murderess, when I writhed in anguish, I implored the man I loved to allow me to bewail my father's death in the way of our people, and to tell me the truth that I might not go mad, he lied! Have you an excuse for that?"

"No excuse, but an expiation. I suppose Miriam has told you what the count is prepared to do. He had hardly heard of your arrival when he came here to take his wife and child home. How white you are! Has this been kept from you?"

The blood had left her cheeks and her head sank back on the chair. "It is nothing," she murmured, as he anxiously felt her pulse. She breathed with difficulty. "Miriam told me, but I interpreted it otherwise."

"And what will you do, now that you know the real interpretation? The very hour you become a Christian, the count is ready to marry you. That is the message I bring you."

She lay back, her eyes shut, her mouth quivering, panting for breath.

He rose. "You are unprepared. I will come for the answer to-morrow."

She was silent. But as he looked at her he saw her face grow more fixed and set. Two large tears forced their way from under the closed eyelids and rolled down her cheeks, but her brows contracted, and she made reply by a shake of the head.

"What is it? Do you decline?"

"What else can I do? It is as if he would bring the dead to life. When I thought of the happiness it might have brought, had it been a voluntary action, tears came to my eyes. But when he does it from fear of the law--"

"Have a talk with him and see how sincere is his repentance. Think, too, of your child, and you cannot say no. Is your boy to go through the world as heir of the Baranowskis or as a bastard? Pardon me, but that must be considered."

She seemed to have forgotten that, for involuntarily her glance turned towards the cradle of her baby. Again tears filled her eyes.

"I will not torture you more," said the doctor, taking up his hat; "but ask your conscience and then decide. I will come again to-morrow." And he left the room.

"I believe you will have your 'yes' to-morrow," said the doctor to the count, as he reported the conversation, "and, both of you being young, all will yet end well."

Agenor looked down moodily.

"I hope you are not mistaken in thinking her love for her child outweighs her hatred for me."

"I am sure of it. She is a Jewess, and what is there a Jewess would not do for her child? It is upon that I place my hope. For those things which would influence a meaner nature, such as prudence, personal advantage, rank, she will not for a moment take into consideration; and if she did, they would not move her."

The doctor was much surprised when Miriam appeared the next morning, saying Judith begged he should not call, as, since she was allowed to go out, she was going to her father's grave.

"That will excite her too much," he said. "Say I beg her to postpone it for some days."

"She will not hear of it; nor do I think it will hurt her. It will injure her more if she wishes to go and is not allowed. If I had yielded to her entreaties I should have taken her there in a carriage long ago. She will not be kept back to-day. She did not sleep last night for excitement. I believe," said the old woman, as calmly as if she spoke of visiting some living friend--"I believe she has something to say to her father!"

The doctor entered Judith's room next day with anxious forebodings, which were not diminished when he saw her face. It wore an expression of gloomy calm, which had become habitual during her convalescence. "That is not the face of one who wishes for reconciliation," he thought, and he had scarcely taken his seat before she began:

"I cannot do it, doctor. I must say no."

"And your boy--have you considered that also!"

"That also. No doubt it would be better for him. It is a sad misfortune to have been born a Jew, and I am leaving him a heritage worse than that even, one which rarely falls to a Jewish child--the shame of birth. But whatever a mother may do to better the status of her child, one thing she must not do--become a criminal. And if I were baptized to-day, it would be a crime against God."

He was astonished. "I did not expect that. Once you were willing, and it was not your fault that

it was not done."

"What did I know of God then? What does any young, happy, innocent thing know of him? And I was so happy. I believed in him, of course; and although I should have preferred to be a Christian, yet I was fairly contented with my creed, and when I wished for anything in addition to my abundance, I prayed for it. My faith was a cloak, and why should I not change it, especially as my lover wished it? It was hard for me only because it parted me from my relations. But they provided me with no new cloak; and when I felt guilty and miserable, then I found what faith was. It was no cloak, but one's very soul. I know what you are going to say," she continued, impatiently; "I have heard it often enough. We have all one Father in heaven! I believed that, too, and when I was in the deepest misery it was a consolation to hope it. But now when I consider my fate and that of those about me, I do not believe it. Why should we have suffered so much for our creed, if it were unnecessary? Is he indifferent as to whether we hold to our Jewish faith or not? Why were we born Jews? No, he must know his own wishes. Our blood, our tears, do not flow in vain, else he would not be the all-merciful, the all-just. Therefore I yield to his will in this, and will not burden my soul with fresh guilt. I have enough to answer for already."

"To your God, the God of the Jews," said the old man, sorrowfully. "I understand you have returned to him. Nevertheless it is true--he is not the God of Jews or of Christians only. You know little of our creed. Learn it."

"I know enough," she exclaimed, wildly. "It is a creed of love, of humanity. It ordains that doors should be opened to the pretty, wealthy Jewess, especially if the owner of the doors is in debt to her father; that young gentleman may talk more unrestrainedly with her than with ladies who are Christians. She, indeed, may feel no strangeness in that society, for she looks upon them as fellow-creatures. But her father and brother do not count as men with them: they are only Jews--of whom the men are born to make money which Christians may borrow, and the women to cater to your enjoyment by their beauty. If a Jewess loses her heart to a Christian and forsakes all to follow him, his religion teaches men never to forget her creed. And then you call your religion one of love!"

She sobbed bitterly, and, loosening a lock of hair, through whose auburn brightness ran a band of silver, she held it up for him to see. "I am twenty-two years old, doctor; need I say more?"

"Have not the Jews done their share in increasing those gray hairs? Even you have the commandment, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' It is one of the most important of your creed, as it is of ours. Do your people act up to it? Remember your reception here."

"I deserved the treatment I received. What did they know? what do they know to-day, except that I am a dishonored woman and my father's murderess? But if you were right, and we had the same laws and sinned against them, still peace and springtide might some day visit the earth; but now it is winter, and we are at war. In winter we stay at home, and in wartime we do not desert to the enemy's camp. If you are correct in saying your altar is a sanctuary of God, then I must not desecrate it. What would be my thoughts when I bent over the font? Of what would I think during the marriage ceremony? After all that has passed, it would be my worst sin. And I fear God. I remember how my father thought of it, and for his sake it is now impossible. When I stood by his grave yesterday, it was clear to me that he was a God-fearing man, and would not have counselled me to lie in sacred matters."

"He was a kind man, too, and knew how much God could forgive. He himself forgave much."

"Yes, misdeeds against himself, but not against God. He thought: 'My child has broken my heart. God will punish her, but I will forgive her. As she will suffer much, let her rest by my side; and when at the last day the trumpet sounds, let her go before the Judge with her hand in mine.' This is what he meant, and it would be hard to surrender this privilege. Yet for my child's sake I would make the sacrifice, only I cannot sin again, even for him."

He looked at her white, inflexible face, and ventured no further remark. He arose silently, pressed her hand, and turned to go. A slight exclamation detained him; it sounded like a sigh. He looked around inquiringly.

She stood, her head slightly inclined, her face scarlet. "One thing more. If he could resolve to--"

"What?" he said, encouragingly.

But she sighed deeply, and dropped her arms. "No," she said. "He will not do that. He cannot, and according to our laws it is out of the question. He would only deride me for thinking of it. Pardon me, I have no more to say."

He asked again, but she answered decidedly, "It is nothing," and he went away.

He now had the unpleasant duty of conveying her answer to Agenor. But the latter was more collected than he had feared. He turned pale and said, "I told you so," and during the doctor's recital betrayed his excitement only by the nervous drumming of his fingers on the table.

"As God wills," he said, when the doctor had concluded. "I have at least the comfort of

knowing I have done what I could. If she bring an accusation against me, you will not refuse to testify to my desire to grant all she could demand."

"No, but unwillingly," said the old gentleman, brusquely. This question of the count's annoyed him, but only for a moment, for he knew it was quite in keeping with a weak character, which was impelled by fear as well as by penitence; and then, to feel he had done his whole duty, he told the count her last words.

They had a startling effect. He leaped from his seat, with flaming cheeks, and, holding out his hands in protestation, he exclaimed: "That cannot be. Better the prison. How can she imagine such a thing?"

"She does not. She did not even tell me what it was, and I should prefer not to know."

"He is not so bad, after all," thought the doctor, as he went down-stairs. "He is in a bad position, and is pitifully weak. I'll wager he comes to me asking me to make another attempt before three days are over."

In this he was mistaken, for Agenor came to him the same evening. "Do have a talk with Raphael. He is the only one to influence her, and it cannot be a matter of indifference to him whether his sister lives here as my wife or as she is at present."

The doctor refused point-blank. "It would be useless. To him she is dead." And in this he was firm, despite prayers and entreaties.

Yet the good old man did go to Raphael the next day. What the count could not effect, Miriam Gold did. Shortly after Agenor's visit, she went in cautiously with a thousand apologies for disturbing him at such an hour. "But I had to come. My heart cries out, 'Tell Dr. Reiser,' and so I am here."

"Say what you wish, Miriam. But I cannot make any further effort for reconciliation between Judith and the count."

"Who speaks of that? Praise to the Father Everlasting that it has failed! While you were with her, I prayed to God so to confuse your words that they might not persuade her to become a renegade. I know God better than most people about here. My heart says he was merciful to Leah, and he will also be merciful to Judith." Her voice sank to a whisper. "Doctor, her soul is in a bad way! It is like a poor little bird that is longing to fly away, but is held back by a few slender threads. She must care for her child, justify herself in the sight of the people, and fulfil God's will. As long as she has to undergo disgrace and persecution she will stay, because she takes that as a punishment from God. But if she married the count, she would be justified, her child would be safe, and persecution cease. Then the threads would be severed, and the poor little bird would fly away."

"I fear that in any case. Has she ever hinted at it to you?"

"No. But when one lives with her, and hears her sigh! Thank God, you have not succeeded. Yet I should like to have another thread to bind her to earth. Her heart bleeds over Raphael's anger. If they could only be reconciled! It is true the thread of persecution would then be loosened," and the old woman gesticulated as if the network of threads were really there. "Yet not completely. I know our people too well. Doctor, because you have a good heart, and she is so miserable, will you not speak to Raphael?"

"It will be useless," he said, and yet he gave his promise.

When he was with Raphael, and beheld the stern face of a morose man of mature years, instead of the bright look of a young man of twenty-three, his heart failed, and he had only hinted at his errand when he arose.

"Dr. Reiser," said a cool, collected voice. "That name must never be mentioned in my house. A few days ago the elders of the congregation called to ask me to see that the boy was received into the covenant of Israel. To them I made answer that I had no right or duty in the matter. And yet a sacred question was therein involved."

"No holier than that which brought me here. If you listened to the elders, you should listen to me also." He then talked of Judith plainly and to the point, as was his wont; and he thought to himself, no heart could be so hard as to listen unmoved.

Raphael gave no sign of impatience, but when he turned his face to the doctor, the latter knew he had spoken in vain. It was the face of one who had forgotten to be merciful.

"You have told me nothing new. It is a hard fate, which you say is undeserved. I say it is deserved. For my part, I will neither add to nor take away from its misery. 'Vengeance is mine,' saith the Lord. For me, she is dead. You say she made no sacrifice of her honor, that she was tricked out of it. Let her accuse her betrayer. It is enough for me to know the well-guarded child of the best of fathers is a lost woman--the first of her faith in this town for centuries. She will not become a Christian? There is no merit in that. It is her duty, and her repentance cannot recall my

father to life or wash the stain from our name."

"Herr Trachtenberg, this is exceptional severity."

"Perhaps not as exceptional," and here there was a break in his voice for the first time, "as my former love for her."

At the door the doctor found the count's carriage. The count was with the magistrate Groze, Fedko said. Had he been asked to call? the doctor queried; and then he had time to think again of Miriam's curious words. He did not believe in them, and yet they depressed him. The thread could not be tied; it had been cut for all time.

On his return home that afternoon from a round of visits, Dr. Reiser was informed that Count Baranowski and old Miriam had called, and that the latter had begged to know when he returned. "Go and tell her!" was the order.

Wearied out, he had scarcely seated himself, when the count entered. The latter looked wretched, and his eye was restless. "Forgive me, but I could not rest. Fedko told me you had been to Raphael, after all. What did he say?"

The doctor told him.

"Then, I have no occasion to repent the step I have taken to-day. I was afraid I had been in too much of a hurry."

His tone contradicted his words, for it was very shaky. He sighed profoundly. "I have been to Groze's, and, following my lawyer's advice, have confessed all."

"How did he receive you?"

"Worse than I expected. He said nothing offensive, but he looked very angry, and refused my hand when I took leave. He also said he would expect me at his office to-morrow morning at eleven. Well, as God will! Anyhow, it was not--"

Suddenly the old gentleman, who had been staring into the street, jumped up, took him by the arm, and led him into the adjoining room. He had seen Judith, her child in her arms, and Miriam, following his servant to the house. "You may listen," he whispered to Agenor, leaving the door ajar as he re-entered the other room.

Judith's cheeks were bright and her eyes flashed. "You are my only friend and will not take it amiss if I ask for advice. This paper was served upon me at noon to-day."

He opened the document. "The magistrate Groze summons you as witness to-morrow morning at eleven. You can imagine in what case you are called, I suppose; and if not, I can inform you. The count has surrendered himself to the law."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "to mitigate his punishment."

"Even if that were the case, can you blame him? He has shown his penitence conclusively enough, but you remain irreconcilable. You will meet him tomorrow in the presence of the judge, for he has been summoned also."

"I will not meet him."

He looked at her. As she stood there, her clear-cut features faintly flushed, her slender form upright, a reflection of her former beauty seemed to surround her. But sorrow had cut its marks deep in her features, and the gray hair was in sad contrast with the delicate oval of her face. The doctor had much difficulty in keeping up his assumed tone.

"Why will you not see him?" he asked. "I think it very possible that Groze will summon you at the same time. It will expedite proceedings and mitigate his penalty. You do not require to take your boy when you appear against his father to-morrow, an act which will probably hand him over to a jailer--"

"Dr. Reiser, are you deserting me? I cannot become a Christian. What can I do?"

"He will tell you that himself," said the doctor, opening the door. She gave a faint scream when she saw Agenor.

"Judith," he sobbed, falling at her feet. "Forgive, forgive! You shall not become a Christian. We will go to Weimar and be married. I swear it."

Her eyes closed, the doctor ran and seized the child, and allowed her to sink gently into a chair.

"It is only a swoon," he said.

CHAPTER XII.

It was a clear, warm Sunday in September, four months later. It had been stormy the whole week, to the delight of many, as it furnished a sufficient excuse for not hanging out flags and otherwise decorating their houses.

But Friday the clouds passed away, and Saturday the sun shone warm and dried up streets and walls, so that the Christians hurried to make up for lost time, and the Jews, who dared not raise their hands till evening, had to work late in the night.

Herr Stiegle had ordered it, and had also stated that the count would forget none of those whose houses remained as usual. Never had garlands and festoons been prepared with such unwillingness or muttered curses, or such hopes for a downpour on Sunday morning.

But the sun shone as in June. "She succeeds in everything, even in this," they groaned. So they put on their festive garments, and went into the street to witness the entry of Count Baranowski and his wife, Judith Trachtenberg, who had been married two months before by the burgomaster of Weimar.

A stranger would have observed little difference between this reception and the one two years previously. Even the triumphal arch was not lacking, and the crowd in the street was greater, for numbers had come from far and wide to see the miracle. There would have been nothing very terrible to the minds of the sight-seers had the first version of the romance been correct--that the representative of one of the noblest names of Podolia had married a baptized Jewess. But that a Christian should marry a Jewess, without priest or altar, and that there was a country in the world where this could happen, without fear of an avenging thunderbolt! Yet the thunderbolt had not fallen, nor the earth quaked on that day; for, hard as it was to believe, much as it contradicted the traditions of the people, the marriage had taken place. It was not unlike a legend. Perhaps it was in one of those countries where there were yellow people and black, inky-black, people.

The count and the Jewess might be married according to the laws of that strange land, but they would surely stay there; they would not dare to breathe the same air as those who believed in God.

The fable became a miracle, hard to understand, but true, nevertheless, when the report went abroad that they were coming back. The emperor allowed it! Nothing could astonish any more, not even the order for a public reception. And why not? They had lost all sense of shame and reverence for God. They were trying how long-suffering was the patience of the Lord and of their fellow-countrymen.

It was warmly debated as to whether piety would permit them to witness the spectacle. Still, when the sun rose that eventful morning, hundreds were to be seen flocking in, in carriages, on horseback, on foot--burghers, peasants, and Jews. Only the clergy and the nobility were absent.

Besides these voluntary spectators, others were here, by order of Herr Stiegle--three hundred peasants and laborers from the count's estate, middle-aged, sober men, who were to form an escort. "You are to keep order," he had said. "Our master and his bride shall be worthily received." He had said only this, but he knew they understood, and would do their duty if necessary.

No one could foretell whether or not it would be necessary, not even this cool, calculating man, who knew the townspeople so well. He comforted himself with the thought that, if painful scenes occurred, it would not be his fault. Weeks before, he had received by special messenger a note from the count, saying that Prince Metternich had notified the government that the marriage was valid. The boy had been baptized and legitimized, and therefore he desired a public reception.

The faithful Swabian had sent his protest, founded on public opinion; but it was fruitless, for another messenger renewed the order, as the countess wished it particularly. "The countess!" Even Herr Stiegle, whose only antipathies were the contracting of debts and the disagreeing of accounts, could not repress a mocking smile at the title. But he did his duty.

His orders were obeyed, and as he looked at the decorations he could not but be content. The Dominican monastery and the rabbi's house alone remained unornamented. Stiegle had not dared to speak to the prior, and the rabbi told him he feared God more than the count.

Herr Groze's house, too, wore its ordinary appearance; the windows were closed, and some of the blinds down. "I did not appear as his judge in the spring, because there was no plaintiff, and I was obliged to regard the count's confession as private. But I do not intend to show him respect I

do not feel."

This was quite within the scope of Stiegle's understanding; but that the countess's brother should make no demonstration was unpardonable. He knew how many letters had passed between them, and therefore believed that there must have been a reconciliation.

There were other cares which pressed upon Herr Stiegle, as he arranged his peasant guard. These honest fellows could be trusted, and the mob was too cowardly for violent deeds; but what if there should be insulting words? Whichever way he looked he saw sullen or sneering faces.

"Herr Twanicki," he said to the little deformed cobbler, who had great influence over his equals, "I count upon you."

"Certainly, certainly; if we only knew what to shout. What is the Hebrew for 'hurrah'?"

Herr Stiegle spoke to Simeon Tragmann, the chief elder, at the triumphal arch, who answered, "We are in our places by your command. But if our people let their indignation master them, what can we do?"

"Indignation! Why, it is such a triumph for you as has never before occurred."

Old Simeon shook his head. "That which is contrary to God's law cannot be pleasing to us. It is the will of God that Jewesses should marry Jews, and that their sons should be Jews."

The only really pleasant face was that of the burgomaster. He had prepared a speech in which he proposed to explain the two creeds and to demonstrate the equalizing force of love. So even his pleasure was spoiled by Stiegle informing him that the count requested that the address should be as brief as possible.

This accomplished, Herr Stiegle placed his guards in line of march, took his stand, and waited anxiously for the shouts of the crowd. Nor were they lacking. The wags took care of that. The cobbler and his friends invented new words for hurrah, and amused themselves by making proposals of marriage to the Jewish women in the crowd. The women screamed, their friends interfered; here and there fists were clenched and a few blows exchanged; but just as the row threatened to become serious, the band of peasants lifted their axes and restored order.

Stupid as they might seem to be, they all knew what was expected from them. Before the Trachtenberg house the public peace was threatened. The Christians made loud complaint for having been forced to hang out banners, while Raphael had been required to make no sign, to which the Jews made answer by averring that he was right, for the disgrace had fallen most heavily on him. "No," retorted the Christians, "the disgrace is for us--the honor for you!"

Again sticks were raised, when a would-be wit called for three cheers for Wroblewski, which, causing a laugh, restored good-humor. It was known to all that Wroblewski had found refuge with a farmer of ill-repute since he had been turned out of the castle, and that he was maintained by his wife's shame.

There were two happy hearts in the town. They both blessed God, in whom they believed; and yet what a wide, impassable gulf was there in their belief!

In Roskowska, Miriam Gold had been waiting for many hours. She had awakened her servant at early dawn, and had herself dressed in her Sabbath clothes. The servant was a girl from the Ghetto, who lived with the eccentric old woman because of the excellent wages she received; for since Judith had cared for Miriam the former beggar had been enabled to act the part of a benefactress to others.

The servant obeyed, for she knew contradiction would be useless. "Miriam's mind as well as her body is waning," she thought. The old woman, whose vitality under persecution and want had seemed indestructible, had been restored, as it were, from the day when she met Judith and her boy, to her youthful energy.

But since Judith had returned to the count her strength had steadily declined. Yet she uttered no word of complaint; on the contrary, a proud smile played about her withered lips as she said, "He knows what he is doing. My work on earth is ended."

When the news of the marriage at Weimar was spread abroad, and the inmates of the Ghetto were loud in condemnation and curses, the old woman held her head still higher. "I knew it," she said to her servant. "But I did not dare hope He would let me see it. How my Lea will rejoice when she knows of it! for surely they will hear of it *there*?"

The girl reported these words, and there were many zealots who visited the small house in the suburb, to reprove the old woman for her laxity. But when they stood by her couch they could not find it in their hearts to say anything to hurt the poor creature, who would only be with them a few days longer.

But Miriam lived on. Even the doctor was surprised. She was always glad to see him, but she would not touch his prescriptions. "He will not let me die yet," she said. "I hope, in His mercy, He

will grant me this short span of time."

When the doctor asked what she meant, she replied, with a peculiar smile, "You will soon hear; and when it happens, I shall go to the synagogue for the last time."

He did not press his inquiry, but told her Judith had requested him to look after her "benefactress."

"Nonsense!" cried the old woman. "She saved my life; and what I said to you about the little bird that wished to fly away, that is nonsense, too. Judith will not do that now. She must see that God has chosen her to demonstrate his will to poor, blind humanity, and this knowledge is a thread that will not be easily severed."

The doctor listened with emotion. How many great intellects would have raised themselves to such an ideal height of humanity as this simple Jewess had through her own misery? A few days passed, and then he discovered for what Miriam had been waiting.

When the news came of the imperial decision and the public reception, Miriam sent for him for the first time since her illness. "Forgive me, doctor; but I should like to share my thankfulness for God's goodness and greatness with one person at least."

The next Sabbath she dressed herself in her best, and, leaning on the arm of her servant, dragged herself to the synagogue. Many times she thought she would have fallen by the way, but she managed to reach the house of God.

The people gazed at her in surprise. For years she had crept in shyly and humbly, and taken her seat in the most retired corner in the women's gallery. Now she cried, imperiously, "Make room! Make room for the mother of Lea!" when some one stood in her way; and although people thought it wrong, they did it, moved by the shining eyes and pale, haggard face.

"She is mad," whispered some. "She is dying," said others; and they let her alone. Like a victor she moved in the midst of the worshippers; like a victor she returned to her home.

"This has been my last walk," she said. "I shall wear this dress but once more."

The day had come, and although it was early, she hurried the servant till everything was as she wished. She had her windows opened wide, so she could hear the volley which was to announce the count's arrival; then she opened her psalm-book, and sent the servant away. "Shall I not stay outside, Aunt Miriam? If you should want anything--"

"Silly girl," said the old woman, with a smile. "What can I want to-day?"

One other person waited the hour of their approach with impatience. He, too, thanked the Lord he had lived to see this day; but it was another God than Miriam's to whom his thoughts ascended. It was the God of vengeance--the God who punishes the sinner for his sins, and dashes the proud in the mire.

As Raphael paced nervously up and down his room, his pale face was lifted proudly, and one thought predominated all others. The shame with which the haughty Christian, in the consciousness of his power, had stained the Jewish house was expiated, and was to-day to be completely wiped out.

The count had made the Jewess his wife without her having abjured her faith. What he felt about it was his own concern; if he suffered, he deserved it. Praise and thanks to the Lord, who had ordained it should be so! And if Agenor was willing to give a satisfaction which even Raphael had not dared to demand, as Judith had written--that is, to stop at the house and ask formally for her brother's sanction to the union--it would be the most trying hour of the count's life. Yet it was just, and Judith had asked only because she knew what befitted her and hers.

Yes, God had greatly prospered them; and the more piercing the voices of the mob, the more proudly and defiantly Raphael held his head. He stamped his foot passionately. "Though they kill me the next moment, with my last breath will I give thanks for having seen this expiation."

His ideas became confused and struggling when he thought of Judith, of what she must feel when she bent her husband's neck so low--he, whose honor was now her honor--of how her life was to be fashioned after all that had transpired, and in an atmosphere saturated with hatred against her and her class.

He scarcely realized this; and when he remembered how he had prophesied her present misery in former times, the feelings which had been his support for the two fearful years which were passed now helped him. She had prepared her own couch. God above kept strict accounts.

But she was his sister, the being he had loved more than himself. There were moments when his anger and bitterness melted into warm, trembling tenderness. What had not this beautiful girl suffered, she who was worthy of any fortune! If she had erred, was it not from a noble impulse? And how she had paid for it!

The hour when she sank at his feet a penitent came into his mind. O God! how emaciated she

was! how burdened by a sorrow which no human voice could dispel!

The cheering for Wroblewski aroused him from his musings; then from a great distance the first faint roar of a cannon, answered by volleys in the marketplace. The count had reached the boundary-line of the town, where the *banderium* was waiting for him. Another half-hour and the procession would be before the door.

But it was not so long. When the count, in an open landau with his wife, and a closed vehicle which contained Hamia, Jan, and the boy, who had been christened Ludwig, reached "The Three lindens," at the limits of the town, he scarcely gave the leader of the *banderium* time to hand him the bread and salt before he ordered the closed carriage to drive to the castle by a circuitous way, and told Fedko to "hurry up."

The landau was driven at a furious pace, and was enveloped in a cloud of dust as it reached the town.

Every moment the count's cheeks grew more colorless, and the quivering of his lips more pronounced. He never looked up, and several times he covered his face with his hands. For weeks, for months, he had anticipated this hour; it seemed life could have nothing more painful in store, and must it be?

Day by day he had asked himself this question; and now he was carried away with indignation at his wife's severity, and with shame at his weakness in yielding to her. What he had undergone the past four months he considered as undeserved; for though his sin had been great, his had been an unheard-of penance.

He had married her in Weimar; what more could she ask? Yet she did. She allowed him to do as he wished with the boy--indeed, it was as if it were her own desire; but when he said they must keep from home until the excitement was over, she urged him to go to Vienna, that they might bring about the recognition of their marriage. He resisted, but she said: "My whole soul hangs on this one thing. Grant this request, and I will reward you well."

"With what?" he thought. "With love and fidelity!" He had earned that before God and men by a greater sacrifice than any man of his position had ever made. Ought she not to be faithful to him, she for whose sake his best friends had been faithless, she for whom he had incurred so many slights? But his resistance grew weaker. His character was not adapted to resist a feeble will, much less this one of iron.

Finally he yielded, because he thought she would see for herself, when in Vienna, the impracticability of her desire. "If you do not succeed, we will go to Italy for two years," he said, and to this she agreed.

Convinced of the futility of her attempt, and annoyed at the gossip she was inciting, he watched her curiously. It was during the *régime* of Metternich--a *régime* which bowed only to the church, and therefore the more impossible. Whenever she spoke of it, he assured her that her object was unattainable.

But she never tired of devising new ways and means, and when these proved useless, she set herself to work to gain the aid of the church itself. A young prelate of an impoverished noble family was the first won over.

Soon her apartments in the "Wilder Mann" swarmed with soutanes and hoods, and one morning she exclaimed: "Congratulate me, Agenor; I am going to Metternich." They had been in Vienna six weeks, and only the banker who had charge of her funds knew how costly all this had been.

Agenor looked at her in astonishment. As she stood before him in her dark, flowing robe, her grayish hair wrapped in a black mantilla, her clearly cut features pale and fixed, only her lips showing her excitement, she inspired him with an emotion curiously compounded of respect and fear. The love he had now and then faintly felt of late was wanting. Never had he realized it as now.

"Are you certain he will receive you?" he asked, hesitatingly. She showed him a card admitting to an audience.

"Have you considered it well?" he continued, dubiously. She gave him no answer, but shook his hand by way of farewell. When she returned two hours later, he saw by her face she had gained her point. He sprang from his seat and gazed at her; but no word of triumph issued from her lips.

"We shall receive the papers this week," she said, abruptly; and when he besieged her with questions as to the methods by which she had accomplished her purpose, she said: "By telling the truth! One succeeds better that way with clever people, and he is clever. He saw at once I had no wish to overthrow either Austria or the church, or even the walls of the Ghetto. He did not make the concession to the Jews, but to the woman. I have concealed but one thing from him."

"What is that?"

She shook her head. "You shall know, and soon, but not to-day. I would have told him that, too, had it been necessary, but it was not," she continued, as if soliloquizing. "He is better than they allow; he is too clever to be entirely base."

He listened without thinking much of what she was saying, until she said: "As soon as we have the papers we will go home, of course."

To that he gave a vehement negative; and when she promised to reward him well, he asked her, indignantly, what she thought of him.

"You do not know what I mean," she said, quietly, with a peculiar smile; "but I do--I will do it in the best way possible." However, that had not so much effect as her promise to remain in town but one week. "After that, you shall decide as to the future."

But it was the word of a high official, a confidant of the premier, which made him quite subservient to her will. "The prince is greatly impressed by your wife, and thinks it a thousand pities such a splendid creature should have been rendered such a miserable woman. If he were the count, he would never forget who it was had done this."

So Judith had her way--even the public procession, with all the humiliation it entailed upon Baranowski, and all the train of evils which would probably follow.

The count straightened himself: "Drive faster, faster! and drive through the town as rapidly as possible!"

Judith had been reclining in a corner of the carriage. A dress of heavy black silk draped her slender form, a splendid lace shawl enveloped her head, and upon her forehead was the diamond diadem, the heirloom of the Baranowskis. But her face was set, and only an occasional sigh indicated the near approach of the hour she had been working for with almost superhuman energy. She laid her hand on her husband's arm: "Agenor, an honest man keeps his word at any cost."

"But it is for your good. You know what Stiegle--"

"No more words. Let us drive slowly now." Unwillingly he gave the order. The *banderium*, who had been left behind, collected again, and surrounded the carriage. The custom-house was in sight. "Hurrah!" shouted the peasants on guard. "Hurrah!" responded the *banderium*. Volleys crashed, the band played, but the confused shouting of the crowd overpowered all. Little could be understood, but that little was unpleasant. Some of the guard raised their axes and clubs threateningly. The *banderium* gathered closer about the carriage. The count sank back in his seat, deathly pale, but Judith sat erect, looking quietly from right to left. And thus they passed the custom-house.

From thence the street widened, and the crowd became greater. But, strange to say, when the music ceased the noise of the onlookers also ended. Had the shouts been provoked by this ovation, or were the people awed by the imperious glance of this pale woman?

There are some still living in the town who remember the *entrée* of the Countess Judith Baranowski, and if you ask regarding it they answer: "It is impossible to describe her appearance, or our emotions when we met her eyes. It was as if she were dying, and yet she had the air of a queen. Those who met her glance were hushed into silence; and when the peasants removed their caps, we did the same."

There was no particular ovation at the triumphal arch. Even the burgomaster felt it would be imprudent to risk breaking the spell which held the multitude in check; so his address was very brief, and the countess's thanks equally so.

Agenor turned to Judith: "I entreat you not to stop at your brother's door. It means certain destruction."

"It must be," she replied; and when he hesitated she herself gave Fedko the command.

And, indeed, it looked as if the count were right. A burst of rage and indignation filled the air when their destination became apparent. "What an insult! what a disgrace!" yelled a thousand throats. "Down with her! down with her!" The guards were pushed aside, axes were lifted, and the fight began. The carriage stopped, its only protection being a few of the mounted men who kept close to it.

The instinct of the cavalier was roused in the count. Drawing a pistol from the girdle of his fur cloak, he leaped out, when suddenly Judith, who as yet had sat still, staring rigidly at the mob, rose to her full height, so that the diamonds on her brow flashed like sunlight. "Away!" she cried to the mounted guards, so authoritatively that they instantly obeyed. "Away!" she said to Agenor, who stood in front of her.

The mob were dumfounded. The fight ceased, and all became suddenly still.

"What do you wish?" and her clear voice was like a silver trumpet. "Do you want to kill me?"

Here I am. No one shall protect me! No blood shall flow on my account. I have already enough on my soul. Come! I am ready."

No one moved; no sound was heard until a voice said: "She has to fulfil the work of the Lord; and the count is doing his share. Do not interfere with the will of God."

There was a murmur and a push, and the crowd gave way. The count sprang into the carriage, and Fedko drove towards the Trachtenberg house. In profound silence the count and Judith entered its door; and when they reappeared, a few minutes after, accompanied by Raphael, no voice was heard. The count shook his hand, and Judith embraced her brother. "To-day, at four, in the 'Good Place,'" she whispered.

They re-entered the carriage, and again something unexpected transpired. Raphael seized her hand, and, with streaming eyes, covered it with kisses. The next instant some one shouted: "She has suffered much; let her be happy now."

"Hurrah!" vociferated the crowd, with hundred-fold repetition. "Hurrah! Peace and joy go with her!"

So they drove to the castle, but Judith no longer sat upright. Nearly fainting, she lay back, the tears streaming down her cheeks.

The tenantry had assembled at the castle, and Dr. Reiser was there also. Judith inquired for old Miriam: "I will go to her as soon as I can leave the table."

"Do so," said the doctor, "for she will not be visible to-morrow. She died two hours ago. Her servant came for me just as I was coming here, and I went to her for a moment. I never saw so happy a face."

Dinner was served in the traditional wedding-dinner style of the Baranowskis, and on the same antique plate. But the feeling was not the same, and the guests left early.

Judith drove with the doctor to the little house in Roskowska to take a last look at her old friend. They had not yet placed her in the coffin. She sat, in her Sabbath clothes, in her arm-chair. Speechlessly Judith gazed on the face, which wore an expression of pure, unalloyed happiness.

"Do you know why Miriam smiled as she died?" asked Dr. Reiser. "She heard the guns which announced your approach;" and then he told Judith of their last conversation. "She died as a conqueror. She took it as an omen that her child had been forgiven, and that she would meet her soon in Paradise."

Judith knelt and kissed the dead hand. "You are right," she said. "She was happy, dying as a victor."

"And you are happy in living as a victor," he added.

"Do not speak so," she protested. "Only the innocent have a right to live after such a fight. The guilty do not survive their victories. But excuse me, I must go; my brother will be waiting."

"What an enigma she is!" thought the doctor, as he watched her drive away. After that he gave no more thought to her.

Raphael was at the grave punctually; and here, at the most sacred spot on earth for them, the long-estranged brother and sister sank into each other's arms in a close embrace.

"This is my place, is it not?" said Judith, pointing to the vacancy between her parents' graves. "No one can deprive me of this--because I am the wife of a Christian, and the pious might say--But you will not allow them--will you, Raphael?"

"If I survive you, you shall be buried there. But we can speak of this in thirty years from now."

"But swear it--by the memory of our father. You know how excited I am to-day."

"If it will soothe you, I swear it."

"And you will put up the epitaph I leave behind?"

"If I survive you, yes."

They talked a little of his plans for the future, they embraced again and again, and she drove back to the castle.

The count was in his study with Stiegle and some of his tenants. She went to her boudoir, where she wrote two short notes--one to Agenor, another to Raphael. By this time it was twilight, but she had her boy brought to her, although he was already in his cot for the night, and she kept him with her for about an hour. When at last the servant came without being called, it was quite dark. She could not see the face of her mistress, for it was bent over the child. But she could tell

by her voice she was weeping, as she said, "It is better for you too--for you too!"

She handed the baby to the nurse, with the remark that the evening was so mild she would take a turn in the garden.

She did so, walking past the spot where Agenor had first kissed her, towards the lake. On her way she met Fedko, the coachman, who said, "Good-evening," receiving from her a pleasant reply. He watched her as she went towards the pond, upon which the moon was shedding its silver light. "When I think," said the good fellow, "of that morning in Borke when I saw her rushing to the pond! How different her feelings must be to-day!"

He was mistaken.

When nine o'clock came, and Judith was still out, the count went to look for her. Unsuccessful in his search, he was about to send the servants, when Hamia brought him the letter she had found on Judith's table. The letter was short, but loving. She commended the boy to his care, and begged he should not torture himself with the thought that he had caused her death. She died that she might not make him miserable or herself more so. She died because, after all she had undergone, she had neither strength nor courage to live. It was no one's fault, certainly not his.

Her face was in no wise disfigured when they lifted her from the water. It was solemn and inflexible, as had been its expression for a long time before.

Two days after, she was buried by her co-religionists in the spot belonging to her in the "Good Place." As they dug the grave, they found the remains of a large bush. Only a few knew that it was once a rose-bush, which had been used in a very solemn ceremony connected with the deceased.

On her gravestone is this inscription:

**Judith, Countess
Baranowski,
DAUGHTER OF NATHANIEL
BEN-MANASSES,
OF THE TRIBE OF ISRAEL.
She died in darkness, but the day will
dawn.**

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK JUDITH TRACHTENBERG: A NOVEL ***

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